

# THE HOLY SPIRIT OVR TEACHER IN PRAYER



R·A·WALTON



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# The Holy Spirit Our Teacher in Prayer

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OR THE CONDITIONS UPON  
WHICH GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

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BY R. A. WALTON, D. D.

AN INTRODUCTION BY  
J. WILBUR CHAPMAN, D. D.

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TO HER  
WHO FIRST TAUGHT MY LIPS TO WHISPER,  
"NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP,"  
AND WHO HAS EVER SINCE MADE MY FAITH IN  
CHRIST, MY LIFE IN HIM, AND MY SERVICE  
FOR HIM, THE SPECIAL SUBJECT OF  
HER PRAYER, THIS MESSAGE IS  
MOST AFFECTIONATELY  
DEDICATED.



## CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

- I. A Child of God by Faith in Christ Jesus.
- II. A Child of God with a Clean Heart.
- III. Taught of the Spirit What to Pray For.
- IV. Vows: or, What to Do with the Answer.



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## INTRODUCTION.

Prayer is the most essential exercise for the Christian, and the emphatic word in this sentence is *exercise*. The most of us look upon it as a privilege sometimes embraced but frequently neglected, until we come to the place where we realize that it is an exercise, and without it we are weak children of God—we have not come to the place of power.

There are widely differing opinions concerning prayer. There are those who say that it is useless to pray, for our Heavenly Father knows what we have need of before we ask Him; and I know of one gentleman who told me that he had come to the place where his trust in God was so great that he never prayed. There are others who say that prayer is fellowship, and it is a good thing to pray, but we can hardly expect that God is going to answer our petitions; and still others who say that prayer is more than fellowship, and while God does give to us the thing that He sees we have need of, yet it can hardly be expected that the In-

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finite One would bestow upon His finite creatures just the things for which they make request. These are the opinions of men. It is refreshing in the presence of them to turn to the Word of God and to read such sentences as these: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it." (John 14:12-14.) And again in Matthew the seventh chapter and the seventh verse we read: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." I think it is Andrew Murray who says that this is not a needless repetition of appeals, for when we ask we receive the gift, when we seek we find the giver and as we knock the door is opened unto us and we are admitted to fellowship, so that prayer is fellowship, but it is more than that. We are told, "Whatsoever we ask we shall receive." Jesus was a wonderful example in prayer. There are four references—one in each of the

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Gospels—presenting to us His prayer life. Mark 1:35: “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” He was the Son of God, and yet He must rise early in the morning and pray, while we who are poor, weak creatures sometimes allow an entire day to pass without approaching God for strength. The day that begins with prayer continues with praise and ends with a benediction, and it is not to be forgotten that this day of our Lord’s which began with His morning prayer ended with the healing of the leper. The secret of the life of power is the life of prayer.

Again in Matthew 14:23: “And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, He was there alone.” He had just worked the wonderful miracle of feeding the multitudes, and yet following that we behold Him praying. Some one has said it is more difficult to use a victory than to gain one, and in most cases this is true. The most of us have failed, following some mountain-top experience, because we were disposed to live on

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the strength of that vision; and Satan, realizing this, submitted us to some sharp temptation under the power of which we went down. Jesus was always praying, before a miracle and after a miracle, at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day. He was peculiarly a man of prayer. What a rebuke He is to us in our, at times, almost prayerless lives!

In John 11:41-43, we read, "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they might believe that Thou hast sent Me. And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." This to my mind is a wonderful illustration of the power of prayer and a striking illustration of the result of the ability to pray.

Not long ago there came to me from a Western city a request that I should write the rules for soul winning on a postal card which was inclosed in the letter. This seemed a strange request to me, because hundreds of pages have been occupied by skillful workmen

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in describing the best rules for soul winning, and I was on the eve of returning the postal card when it occurred to me that I could write in a single sentence upon this one card the real rule for the winning of a soul—that would be our ability to pray. It was after He prayed that He said, “Lazarus, come forth,” and Lazarus arose. Then in Luke 9:29 we read, “And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” In many respects this is the best illustration. The prayer life is the secret of a transfigured life, and he who knows how to approach the Master in prayer comes day by day to absorb more and more of the beauty of His life, until at last the fashion of the countenance is changed. When Paul said, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,” as he wrote his Epistle to the Romans he used the same word which in Luke’s Gospel describes the transfiguration of Christ, so it was as if he had said, “Be ye transfigured.” The secret of this is in knowing how to pray.

On the margin of a dear friend’s Bible opposite the sixth chapter of Matthew and the sixth verse, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter

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into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly," I read the following. Each word begins with "P," and for this reason is the more striking:

*"Period.* There must be a period for prayer, suggested by the word 'when' in the text. A little portion of each day ought to be set apart for getting alone with God.

*"Place.* There must be a place for prayer, suggested by the word 'closet' in the text. A closet where even your dearest friend has not the privilege to enter if you are in prayer. Every home ought to have its secret place where occasionally one could get away from the world and meet his Father.

*"Privacy.* There must be privacy in prayer, suggested by the 'shut door.' This means that for a time at least the world is to be shut out and you are to be alone. There is no business man in the world but what could take a little bit of each day for such communion as this. No child of God but what could give at least ten minutes to communion concerning heavenly things.

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*Persons.* There are certain persons in prayer suggested by the sentence, 'Pray to thy Father.' The scriptural form of prayer is unto the Father by the Spirit and in the name of Christ.

*Promise.* There is a sure promise in the Word suggested by the sentence, 'He shall reward thee openly.' Mr. Spurgeon was once asked how it was he was able to secure so much from God. He responded, 'I always take one of His promises and plead them and God never goes back on His Word.' It has been suggested by some one that if prayer is to prevail with God there are certain conditions which must always be borne in mind.

"First: Separation from sin. If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.

"Second: Righteousness. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

"Third: He that cometh unto God must believe that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

"Fourth: Submission. If we ask anything, according to His will He heareth us.

"Fifth: Thankfulness. 'In everything by

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prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.' ”

It is a delight to write these introductory words for the book written by my friend, who has been deeply taught in prayer and greatly blessed in his personal and public ministry with others. The truths contained in this book ought to revolutionize many lives. I pray God that they may.

J. WILBUR CHAPMAN,  
Fourth Presbyterian Church, New York.

## PREFACE.

For what measure of assurance God has been pleased to grant me that the discourses contained in this little book have been helpful, I am deeply grateful, as well as for the repeated requests that I put them in this permanent form. They are presented with the same hope, and I pray the same faith, in which they have been spoken here and there in the evangelistic work to which God has called me.

I am convinced that the one great cause for the lack of the true spirit of prayer among God's people, and faith in the promises which God our Father has made to us, is the failure to understand the simple conditions upon which alone He has promised the answer. The very idea of prayer contemplates the existence of conditions which must be clearly comprehended before one can know how to pray.

The difficulty in so many unanswered prayers is not God's unwillingness to grant such blessings as are desired, but that the petitioners have not themselves made such advancement in the divine life as to make it

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possible for the Father to bestow His mercies upon them.

For the General Outline plan presented, nothing further is claimed than a sincere desire to impress upon the mind of the petitioner that much to be attained lies before the prayer life, and to stimulate him to consider something of the wonderful possibility outlined for us in His blessed word for the development of this Christ life. While it could have been greatly enlarged both in its scope and detail, it is not intended as an exhaustive outline of the Spirit's ministry, but only to suggest in the most general way the Scripture plan and the possibility of the life of the believer, the operation and work of the Spirit in the Old Testament dispensation being entirely omitted.

Credit is frankly given for quotations which I have made, when positive to whom I was indebted. I have made frequent reference to "The Theology of Prayer," by Rev. B. M. Palmer, D. D.—a work which I do not believe has its superior on this subject; to Hodge's "Systematic Theology;" to "Dabney's Theology," and to the miscellaneous writings of the Rev. T. E. Peck, D. D.

THE HOLY SPIRIT  
OUR TEACHER IN PRAYER



# The Holy Spirit

## Our Teacher in Prayer

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### CHAPTER I.

#### KNOW THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH GOD'S PROMISES REST.

TO secure the blessings which God the Father has promised His children, we must comply with the conditions upon which these mercies are promised. God's faithfulness to His promises no one questions who has complied with His conditions; yet often we meet with those who charge God with unfaithfulness, who seem never to have thought it necessary to comply with the simple conditions upon which alone He has promised His mercies.

To know the conditions one must know the promises in which the conditions are stated. To know the promises the Word of God must be "searched."

To claim the promises is to be filled with the Spirit. He wrote the Word, and He alone can teach it. One is never more filled with the Spirit than with the Word. The first link.

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therefore, in the chain of answered prayer is a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

God's mercies are not unconditioned, or prayer would not be necessary. The very fact that prayer is suggested, implies the existence of important conditions. So plain and simple are the terms upon which God grants His mercies, that for this reason, possibly, many seem to overlook altogether the fact that such conditions are made necessary. Every requirement that He makes is simple and possible, but though simple and possible, is, nevertheless, indispensable and necessary to answered prayer. If we wish God to hear our request it is quite natural that He should first require us to obey Him.

It is hardly necessary to say that we should always look with suspicion upon one who begins to talk about the "Fatherhood of God," the "Brotherhood of Mankind," or "His unconditioned mercies," etc. This is the shibboleth of those who wish to rob Christ of His glory.

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### WHAT IS PRAYER?

There is no more encouraging sign of the times than that prayer is being studied today as it has not been for many years in the past. Not only have some of the most valued books that the world has ever known been recently published on this subject; not only have magazine articles been more numerous, and conventions and summer schools given much of their programs to the discussion of this most important subject, but there is on the part of the people generally a manifest desire to have some clear conception of what prayer is. This is very encouraging, and especially so because investigation is being made from a most practical standpoint. In this most intensely practical age, the question is asked with more force than ever before, "What should prayer mean to me in everyday life?" It might be helpful just here for us to review briefly some definitions of prayer. We may then be able to come to some definite understanding as to what one should expect prayer to move God to do for us in our everyday life that He otherwise would not have done.

God does not force His blessings upon us,

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but waits until we have come to that point when we so much desire what He can give as to come to Him in prayer and ask for it. Every true definition of prayer must emphasize the earnest expression of our desire. "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." Too great emphasis cannot be placed upon the necessity for the element of praise in prayer. An expression of gratitude almost necessarily insures true confession. Confession and thanksgiving are inseparably connected in a heart that is controlled by the true spirit of prayer.

Dr. Hodge has given some most helpful definitions and practical suggestions with regard to this subject. "Prayer," he says, "is the converse of the soul with God; therein we manifest or express to Him our reverence and love for His Divine perfection; our gratitude for all His mercies; our penitence for all our sins; our hope in His forgiving love; our submission to His authority; our confidence in His care; our desires for His favor; and for

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those providential and spiritual blessings needed for ourselves and others."

Phillips Brooks says: "Prayer is the sincere desire of an honest heart sent to God." A friend of mine told me that several months since, when conducting a prayer service, an old gentleman arose and said: "Prayer is *good manners* toward God. It would be very bad manners for us to come into the presence of our superiors without proper respect. Good manners toward God, then, necessitates our *adoration*. Good manners require that due apology be made to one who has been illy treated: our sin against God demands our *confession*. Further, good manners impel us to express our thanks to one from whom we have received great favors. Good manners toward God compel us to *give thanks* to Him for His mercies. Finally, good manners require that we should come with great politeness and deference to one from whom we desire to ask great favors. As we come to God, a great *Ruler*, it should be always with the true spirit of humility and supplication." This is an old division of the subject, but his method of putting it was new and impressive.

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### EXPECTATION.

The Scripture's demand for faith makes it clear that prayer is not prayer until there is a *certainty of expectation*. When once you have grasped the conditions for sincere prayer, faith can and does claim the exact blessings which we ask. Müller used to say, "Where faith begins, anxiety ends." Faith, then, brings expectation. The question back of this is, What brings faith? It is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. "In prayer the Holy Spirit most completely attains the object for which He was given." Every step in prayer must be taught us by the Holy Spirit; faith to claim the promises of God through His direct agency. "His influence is the touch of the unseen," for which every one needs to pray with a certainty of expectation.

### TO WHOM IS PRAYER OFFERED?

"God alone is the proper object of religious worship. Matt. 4:10: "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The general reason for this is, that He alone possesses the at-

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tributes which are implied in the offer of religious worship. The Being who is to be worshiped by all the Church must, first, be *omniscient*. Otherwise our prayers would never reach His ears, and if conveyed to Him, they would utterly confound and overwhelm any finite understanding in the attempt to distinguish, comprehend, and judge concerning them. Then, moreover, the Being to whom we resort in prayer must be *all-wise*, in order to know infallibly what is best for us, and how to procure it. Such omniscience as we have above described implies, of course, omnipresence. Second: This Lord must be *infinitely good*, otherwise we should have no sufficient warrant to carry Him our wants, and His benevolence would be overtaxed by such constant and innumerable appeals. Third: He must be *almighty*, else He is no adequate refuge and dependence for our souls in all exigencies. Some most urgent wants and dangers must arise, which only omnipotence could meet.

For these reasons the offering of prayer is a virtual ascription of divinity to its object; and we reject all such appeals to saints and angels as idolatrous. For us sinners, the door of

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prayer is opened only by the Covenant of Grace. Why? Now, we have seen that God the Father stands economically as the representative of the Holy Trinity, on the part of the Godhead, as Christ, the Son, stands as sinners' representative in that transaction. Hence, prayer is usually addressed to the Father through the Son, and by the Spirit. Eph. 2:18: "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." But we must not imagine that one person is more properly the object of prayer than another. All are made alike the objects of worship, in the apostolic benediction, II Cor. 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen," in the formula of baptism, and in Rev. 1:4: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come: and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne." But more: We find Jesus Christ, so to speak, the separate object of worship, in Gen. 18:23; Josh. 5:14; Acts 7:59; Rev. 1:17; 5:8; Heb. 1:6, etc. These examples au-

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thorize us to address a distinct petition to either of the Persons.

The more immediate model which God has given for our prayer is the Lord's prayer. That it was not intended for a liturgy to be servilely followed, our authors have shown in their discussion of liturgies. But that it was intended both as a general guide to the structure of our own petitions and as a form whose very words are to be employed by us on proper occasions, is manifest. (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2.) The most plausible objection to it, as a model for Christians, is that it contains no express reference to a Mediator, and to response through His merit and intercession. The answer is that it is an Old Testament prayer—is intended as such, because that dispensation was still standing. When it was about to close, Christ completed this feature of it by enjoining the use of his name. See John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23-24.

When we examine the inspired rule of prayer, we find that, to be acceptable, it must be *sincere and hearty*, it *must be addressed to God* with faith in Christ; it must be for objects agreeable to God's will; *it must be promoted by*

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the Holy Ghost; *it must be accompanied* with genuine repentance and gratitude.

See Ps. 62:8; Jer. 29:13; Jno. 14:6; I Jno. 5:14-15; Rom. 8:26; Phil. 4:6-7; I Jno. 3:22; Ps. 66:18; Heb. 11:6; etc. (R. L. D.)

### PRAYER IS NOT FLATTERY OR INFORMATION OFFERED TO GOD.

The Scripture nowhere teaches that prayer is flattery offered to God. We cannot flatter God into being willing to grant us our desires, nor is this any part of the purpose or plan of prayer. The Protestant world when it makes sport of the Romanist who rushes through with his paternosters or Ave Marias, being careful to count the number of times he has repeated them, should consider the length and wordiness of his own prayer. Matt. 6:7-8: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be ye therefore not like to them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." Then, again, we do not pray in order that we may inform God of our needs or our wants. Matt. 6:32: "For after all these things do the

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Gentiles seek: for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." It is a method that God uses to bring about and to promote a free conversation between His children and Himself, and to induce in them that true spirit of dependence we should ever feel, as we daily live upon His bounty. It is not possible to bring God under obligation to us, and prayer has no such design. Prayer has no end which had not its object in us. Frequently one meets with those who seem to fancy that the longer the prayer, the more God owes us for this worthy performance, and therefore we are privileged to live for some time upon His bounty.

We read the Bible that we may know the blessed truths that are contained in it. Yet the number is far too large who seem to believe that God is under obligation to the one who reads His Word.

A professing Christian made the statement that it was her custom to read her Bible and devote much time to prayer on Sunday morning, so that she might spend the afternoon as she pleased. This one undoubtedly supposed that God was very much flattered by her pen-

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ance of the morning, and that this had purchased for her any form of indulgence which she wished for the afternoon. Not infrequently we meet with non-professors who are under the impression that if they have condescended to attend church on Sabbath morning or to do some menial service, therefore God is so much obligated to them that they are privileged to live apart from Him and in whatever open violation of His commands their wicked hearts may desire. From this very fact, it is the gravest injustice to use unconverted men in church work and worship. The hope in these elections and appointments is to gradually draw such into the church and to win them for Christ, but instead an irreparable injury is done. Encouraged to believe that God is delighted with such services, it is most difficult to lead them to open confession of faith in Christ or to show them their need. The heart must first be right. Many of this class go through the form of prayer and show their total misconception of its office.

God's method of grace is such that it is possible for the sinner to enter into that relation with the Father whereby His blessings are

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pledged in the bountiful exercise of His own benevolence. God has graciously provided a plan whereby His blessings can be actually bestowed and has originated prayer as a means whereby they can be secured. As long as sin remains unrepented of and unforsaken, there is absolutely no exercise in which the sinner can engage which is pleasing to the Father, and absolutely no service which he can render that will be acceptable. It would seem a religious act for a man to plow to raise food with which to feed his family, and yet if a man will not turn from his sin and accept Christ as his Savior, of this one the Scripture says that "the plowing of the wicked is sin."

But even among professing Christians there is a total misconception of the office of prayer. It is not to inform God of what He does not know, nor, as some one has said, "to move His sluggish goodness by an appeal to His heart," and thus induce Him to alter His plans out of consideration for our earnest appeal.

The truth is that God, as our Father, looks upon us with earnest desire, waiting for such expressions of our need as to make it plain that we are ready to receive the blessings which He

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has in store for us. Such blessings He has prepared, and has planned to bestow in answer to earnest prayer. He needs no persuasion or flattery to make Him willing to bless us. He only needs for us to be in that position where He can bless us, and where the blessing will prove a great benefit. Prayer, then, does not produce a change in God but a change in us, and offers to God a chance for which He has been looking, through which to bestow His infinite goodness.

God has provided in His wise providence that the fruits of the earth shall be secured by the farmer by wise and industrious cultivation of the soil. The farmer does not originate the powers and forces that go to make the crops grow. He only plows and sows the field so wisely as to receive the blessings which Nature has in store for him.

It would require more space than we have at our disposal to give all the reasons why God has appointed prayer, even if we knew them. There are many, however, which cannot be overlooked, such as the necessary self-examination which prayer forces upon us.

“Prayers may be vitiated by unseemly dispo-

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sitions which pervade them. The dictatorial spirit which robs the Deity of all liberty of action; the irreverent spirit which rushes hotly into His presence with feeble conception of His dreadful majesty; the impatient spirit which takes away the divine discretion in the bestowal of His benefits; the arrogant spirit that rebels against the divine supremacy; the presumptuous spirit which will argue with Omniscience as if on terms of full equality; the selfish spirit that seeks its own advantage with no regard to God's glory; these and other violent defects disqualify the prayer and turn it into empty breath. He who sits on the mercy seat to receive the true suppliant finds no element of genuine worship in all that is uttered. The worshiper must sit in judgment upon himself, must scan his most secret thoughts, must weigh his own heart in the scales of honest criticism, and thus with a true reverence prepare himself for audience with the Deity. Surely, *if anything can tone the spirit into caution and humility, it is the rigid introspection demanded in preparation for prayer.*

*"Prayer brings into exercise the full complement of all the faculties, and that, too, in their*

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*due and original subordination.* Two important facts are here signalized. If the whole intellectual and moral nature is brought out, its various and independent powers will qualify each other and the proper equilibrium will be preserved. And if the order disturbed by sin shall be restored by grace, additional security is afforded for the right action of the whole. No proof is needed that all the powers of the soul are exercised in prayer, beyond the simple enumeration of them in the several functions they fulfill. The understanding—how it is employed in apprehending the relations we sustain to Jehovah, and the various disclosures of Himself in the Word! The judgment—how needful the scales in which it weighs the obligations under which we lie, and the value of the blessings for which we sue in prayer! The conscience—how constantly must it interpret for us the divine law, that we may embrace the right and shun the wrong! The affections—how they are stirred when God is seen in the loveliness of His being, the supreme object of worship and desire! The will—how indispensable its decisions in translating our thoughts and purposes into the acts which

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make up the history of human life! Can one of these fail to render its quota of service when man bows in worship before that God whose dim, dark shadow he himself is?"—B. M. P.

Of ourselves we cannot pray. The understanding, the judgment, the conscience, the affections, must all be controlled and operated by the Holy Spirit.

In our helplessness, we must all begin with the prayer of Fenelon:

"O God, take my heart,  
For I cannot give it unto Thee;  
And when thou hast taken it,  
Oh, keep it, for I cannot keep it for Thee,  
And save me in spite of myself. Amen."

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## CHAPTER II.

### A CHILD OF GOD BY FAITH, NOT FLESH.

**A**LL the promises of God are yes in Christ Jesus. II Cor. 1:20: "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Amazed at the richness and fullness of God's promises, covering every phase and condition of life, the Psalmist expresses his wonder in Ps. 31:19: "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" The real question to be answered is this:—Can an impenitent man pray for the blessings promised God's children? There were those in the time of our Savior, as there are today, who seem to believe that God was their Father without believing in Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. This is not true. The denial of Christ as your Savior is the denial of God as your Father. If anyone had a right to claim God as Father, without faith in Jesus Christ, it would have been the

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Jews of our Savior's time, who were the sons of Abraham.

In John the eighth chapter we find a full discussion of this subject. In the forty-first verse they claim God as Father; in the forty-fourth verse, because of their unbelief in Him, He tells them plainly, "If God were your Father, ye would love me"; "Ye are of your father the devil." An impenitent man cannot pray for blessings which are promised the children of God, nor does God need cries and tears to induce Him to be reconciled to the sinner. The impenitent man can, the moment he is willing, take Jesus Christ as His Savior, and this offer is open to him at any time he sees fit to accept, or if you like, pray for it. God is willing to become his Father, provided the man is willing to take Jesus Christ and become God's obedient child. Instead of the sinner having to pray God to be reconciled to him, God is on record as praying to the sinner to be reconciled to Him, in Christ. II Cor. 5:19-20: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are am-

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bassadors for Christ, *as though God did beseech you* by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This, says McKay, is God's prayer to the sinner, which must first be answered before the sinner can pray. God wills to receive him into His own family, and invites him to leave the world and come at once for this adoption. II Cor. 6:17-18: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." God the Father is then already reconciled to the sinner and only waits for the sinner to be reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus, to bestow His richest blessings upon him.

The impenitent man has no right to pray for blessings which are promised God's children. Nothing is more frequent than to meet with unbelievers of the very worst type, who believe it their privilege to ask for any blessing promised God's children, and charge God with being false to His promises because they receive no answer. Matt. 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and

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all these things shall be added unto you.” During the late war between England and the Boers, the papers stated that a young man who went down as a private in his father’s regiment deserted the first day he landed. Sometime later the heartbroken colonel went to Lord Roberts and pleaded for the life of his son, that if captured he should not be shot as a deserter deserves. Note what England had promised the young man when he left her shores—first, clothing, ammunition and wages. The sinner claims that God has promised blessings to His children, but is the sinner who has deserted God in any way entitled to the privileges of sonship? Truly no one could imagine that the young deserter had any claim upon Lord Roberts’ mercy. Would it not have been presumption for him to have charged upon England a breaking of her pledges because she had never furnished him one day’s rations, one suit of clothes, one round of ammunition, or one day’s wages? Would not all this have been used against England instead of for her? For God to bestow His blessings upon the impenitent would be equally unreasonable.

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### MADE CHILDREN OF GOD BY THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST.

We come to be children of God only by the authority of *Christ Himself*. We cannot, then, pass Him by and ignore Him in our demands for the blessings which are conditioned upon our being sons of God. John 1:12: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on His name." It is quite ordinary for blasphemers and men who lead the most wretchedly immoral and wicked lives to consume some time each day in the recital of words which they call prayer, possibly to quiet conscience as much as anything else. These men who have never known one moment of time when they were willing either to confess Christ or accept Him as their Savior, are among the first to charge God with unfaithfulness to His promises.

Faith in Christ brings man to realize his relation to the Father and the provision God has made in Christ to save man "from" sin, and not "in" sin. The denial of Christ is not only the denial of Sonship, but a denial of the necessity for the great sacrifice and work of

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Christ as a condition for the pardon of sin, and to secure the blessings promised by the Father.

The Revised Version makes very clear the passage quoted above, the necessity of taking Christ as a Savior before we have the privilege of being adopted into God's family: "As many as receive Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." The common belief seems to be that we have this right independent of Jesus Christ, which is far from the Scripture teaching. The suffering and death of Christ must first occupy the mind and heart of one who would exercise faith in the promise of God. It is the recognition of Christ as having opened up by His life and death the possibility even of our approach unto God. He is our Priest and Mediator, who has offered Himself on the cross for us.

We must first be adopted into the family of God before we have a right to the privileges of the sons of God. Because an unbeliever has no right to pray for the blessings promised God's children, is he therefore absolved from the duty of prayer? By no means, for then what is his fault would be made an excuse for

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his failure in a plain duty. His inability to pray lies in the fact that he has never been willing to yield himself unto God and meet the condition of prayer.

The very fact that one is not inclined to pray shows him to be in that state of guilt and sin which is farthest from God, and therefore in greater need for prayer. His lack of inclination to pray is but an evidence of the stupefying depths of sin into which he has fallen.

### IS PRAYER POSSIBLE WITHOUT CHRIST?

The necessity for Christ as our Savior, before the sinner can ask for the blessings promised God's children, is taught throughout the Old Testament Scriptures as well as the New. The arrangement of the furniture of the tabernacle will illustrate this. The altar of sacrifice stood first of all on entering, and one must pass by this before reaching the altar of incense, just as in the New Testament we are taught we must first accept Christ as our Savior before we can come to offer the incense of worship unto God. The Old Testament saints had the same absolute need of Christ that we have. What God now grants through

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Christ because of what He has accomplished was in the Old Testament times granted on a credit of what He should accomplish. Romans 3:25 will show us this: "Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of *sins that are past*, through the *forbearance* of God." The "forbearance" of God, then, was granted on an expectation of Christ's fulfilling His contract to die for us and to represent us. The altar of sacrifice daily reminded the people of this "forbearance" of God, since the altar of sacrifice typified the sacrifice which the Lamb of God should make for the sins of the whole world.

Out of recognition for what Christ has acquired by His life and death, God can now allow the sinner to approach Him in faith and call Him Father. One who has sinned is already under sentence of death, and has forfeited all right to approach unto God. Christ, though, by his death and suffering, has more honored the law than a literal infliction of the penalty upon all mankind could have done. He has more honored God's character as really hating sin and loving holiness. It was in His

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own person that sin met its penalty, therefore, making it possible for God to be just, and out of recognition for the work of Christ, to justify the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. This is the condition of sonship.

In the Covenant of Redemption, it was agreed between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, that the condition whereby a sinner could secure the benefits of the work of Christ should be acceptance of Christ as a personal Savior. Compliance with this condition not only secures the pardon of all sin but the adoption of the individual into the family of God. He can now approach Him by this door and know that he can utter his petitions in the ear of his sympathizing and loving Father.

We see, then, that every privilege of prayer comes alone through Jesus Christ. John 10:9: "I am the door; by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Again, John 14:6: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

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### A NEW CREATURE.

That is an hour of love when regeneration is effected in the sinner. "That dead sinner whom God regenerates is to the Divine consciousness a beloved, elected, justified and adopted child." God quickens His children that He may bestow upon them the beauties of His grace.

What it is that constitutes the act of regeneration can not be told. In the natural kingdom the mystery of life and its origin is almost entirely beyond our knowledge. A new nature is grafted upon the old stock—which shall dominate and control the life? If a man has two natures, the old man and the new man, under the power of which is he living? Eph. 5:22-24 urges that he put away the old man and put on the new man. The general opinion that the root of a tree affects the top instead of the top affecting the root is not true. Grafting does go down, provided the sprouts of the old stock are kept from growing, but this is essential. Take the stock of two peach trees and graft onto one a plum. In a very short time, if the two are examined it will be seen that the stock of the

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one which had the plum graft has very large roots and is strong and healthy, while that of the sister peach, which has nothing to change its nature, continues small.

The grafting is done now very differently from what it was 50 years ago. The grafting was then done in the branches. Now it is done as close down to the root as possible. The seedling is cut off just where it comes out of the ground. It is winter's work and is usually done by the nurseryman when the wood is dormant. Budding is done after the sap has risen in the fall and is quite a different process. The grafting of an apple tree is usually done on a crab apple stock, which is the best.

The hardest sinner may be used as a stock to bring forth the fruit of righteousness. The graft affects the root, as proven further by the variety of the graft. The Rambo apple tree always has a poor root and the influence of the graft when the sprouts are kept away makes the root even of a worse character than it was before. The Greening is a good root maker and influences the stock on which it is grafted. The White Pippin graft will influ-

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ence the roots to go deep down in the earth, and the nurseryman always instructs his workmen to prepare differently for this than for any other. "The trunk to be grafted is absolutely wild. Left to itself, the wild will never yield anything good, but that little graft has the wonderful power of converting the sap and vital forces into something good, causing the wild trunk to bear rich flowers and noble fruit. By keeping down the wild shoots below the graft, it will gradually reach to the roots and we forget that the tree was ever wild."

In regeneration something is planted in man which by nature he lacks. God sends the rain upon the just and upon the unjust, but only the just will bring forth the fruit of righteousness. God's promises are therefore to the regenerate, and not to the unregenerate who will not be His children by faith in Christ. All men everywhere are commanded to repent, but only His adopted children are commanded to pray, "lifting up holy hands." The thirty thousand, or more, promises of God are His persuasions to leave the ways of sin. Those who accept Christ as a Savior, God justifies, and under the covenant of grace sovereignly

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imputes to them the righteousness of Christ. This is the legal ground for securing to His people both remission of penalty and a right to all the promises conditional on prayer.

### THE MEDIATOR.

Nothing in Scripture is more plainly stated than the necessity for the use of the name of Christ in our approach to the Father. "For apart from Me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5, R. V.) The possibility of making use of the name of Christ without having accepted Him as Savior is inconceivable. John 14:13: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 15:16: "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you,"—that God "*may*" have the privilege of giving, and God's privilege of giving is bounded by your faith in the name of Christ. To every man out of Christ, God the Father stands as Governor of the Universe. He can not and will not treat us in any private capacity or listen to us as individuals till we come into the use of the name of His Son. For we are all at enmity with God until the

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sin we have committed is taken away. Eph. 2:13: "In Christ Jesus ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for He is our peace." In ancient Judaism the bond-servant was not allowed to apply the term of father, while the privilege was granted free servants who desired adoption. Having been adopted into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and accepting Him as a Savior, God can listen to us as individuals, and bless us as we severally need. The most flagrant sinner, and with pronounced unbelief in Jesus Christ, often calls on God for such blessings as protection, guidance, food, raiment, etc., as though God could and would listen and allow approach unto Him without Christ. A friend and admirer of the great New York mission worker, Jerry McAuley, says the first night she visited his mission with her husband, she went forward and knelt at the altar and thought she was praying, when Jerry, stooping down, overheard her. His only comment was, "Put 'for Jesus' sake' in your prayer if you want it answered." The law of approach unto God has always been by the means of a mediator. In the old Jewish times

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it was by the priests who represented Christ, so today we can come through the mediation of Christ, our High Priest, who has ascended on high. Prov. 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination."

Through faith in Jesus Christ we become the children of God, as stated in Gal. 3:26: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." While we may emphasize this phase of the truth, it must not be forgotten that it is through Jesus Christ that we gain a knowledge of the Father. He is our Prophet as well as our Priest, and in revealing to us the will of God, He reveals also to us the Father. As we know Christ in his ministry of love and compassion, as portrayed to us in the Gospels, in every excellency of His nature, He shows us the character of the Father. Heb. 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds."

John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any

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time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." We read the character of God the Father in the Book of Nature, but God the Father created the universe by the Son; so when we look into the Book of Nature here we also are indebted to the revelation which the Son has made of the Father. Ps. 19:1-3: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

One disposed to honor God the Father should remember John 5:23: "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him." In accepting Christ as our Prophet and Priest, we have not only Him who reveals the Father, but who makes intercession for us. Heb. 7:25: "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." To use the words of the Master Himself in John 14:13-14: "And whatsoever ye shall ask

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in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Also, John 16:23-24: "And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

The believer prays unto the Father through the Son and by the Spirit. Christ is ever in the presence of the Father both as Advocate and Intercessor, His own person a living receipt for every end of justice; the indwelling Spirit ever present to teach how and what to pray for.

"He ever lives above,  
For me to intercede;  
His all redeeming love,  
His precious blood to plead.

"Five bleeding wounds he bears,  
Received on Calvary;  
They pour effectual prayers,  
They strongly speak for me."

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### FAITH THE PREREQUISITE FOR ADOPTION.

That faith is a condition of answer to prayer seems almost to go without saying. What must one have faith in, in order to have prayer answered? There must be not only faith in Christ and faith in the promises of the Scriptures, but this faith must be in the promises through Christ. Faith is the one chord which runs through every condition of acceptable prayer.

The very idea of prayer seems to imply faith, for, as some one has said, "Why would we seek aid from God if there is doubt of His being able to help us?" To come without faith would make our coming a mockery and blasphemy.

"Faith" occurs only twice in the Old Testament Scriptures, while in the New Testament it occurs 240 times or more. The word which is commonly used in the Old Testament Scriptures is "belief." *Belief* is the process of which *faith* is the product. In the history of God's dealings with His children in the Old Testament Scriptures there is a gradual unfolding of the character and attributes of the Godhead. Exodus 6:13: "I am Jehovah. I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto

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Jacob, by the name Almighty God; but by My name Jehovah was I not known to them." Gradually, as God revealed Himself as Jehovah, with all the tender attributes of the Father, men began to understand the character of God as love and to lay that foundation for belief which in the New Testament ripened into faith. In the New Testament we find the full ground for our faith in God, since He has been revealed to us by His Son. All the attributes,—love, compassion, long-suffering and mercy—were plainly exhibited in the life and character of our Lord. In order for us to have faith in God, we must know His mercy; then we will know how approachable He is. We must recognize His long-suffering before we come for confession. We must be assured of His faithfulness before we trust His promises. The fundamental idea of right praying is found in some very definite conception of God. This definite conception of God, as some one has said, is the foundation of man's character. The less one knows of God's real character, the less he is able to pray the prayer of faith. On the other hand, the more one knows of the character of God, the more bold becomes his

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faith and the less suspicion of coldness and indifference is found. Faith, without fear, comes only when we know God to be absolutely good and that His love will not fail.

Jesus required faith before He performed His miracles. To the father who asked Him to cast the demon out of his child (Mark 9:23), "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." To the Syrophenician woman, who came praying Him to heal her daughter, he put every test before finally granting her request. So wonderfully did her faith stand the test that it was ever after a lesson to the disciples who witnessed it. He granted her more than she asked. Matt. 15:28: "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

The ground for our assurance of faith is God's word that He will answer prayer. Both the Old and the New Testament abound in such pledges and promises. The Psalmist says: "O Thou that heareth prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." His pledge to us that

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He will answer prayer is the hope that inspires us to come. Faith takes His promises at their real value. God's promises to answer prayer are so clearly and plainly stated that it seems almost incredible that there should be such a lack of faith in prayer. Concerning those blessings which are not specifically named, we have the promise of the Holy Spirit as our guide and instructor for what to pray.

The promises of the Scriptures are made to Jesus Christ as our representative and as our King, through whom alone they can be and will be dispensed for our benefit. He is our Trustee and represents us as advocate before the Throne. Having Himself complied with all the terms of grace, He has a right to promise us these blessings on condition of our faith in Him. There is no promise made in the Scriptures to one out of Christ. In Jesus Christ we have a right to all the promises which were made unto Him by the Father. He then is the administrator of these blessings of the Father unto us who are in Christ. Faith in Christ is the mark of distinction between those who have the right to claim the promises and those who have not. There must be

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this vital bond of faith between us and Christ, the Trustee of the Father, before the promised blessings can be secured. It must be clearly understood that in no sense do we deserve the answer to our prayers because we have faith in Christ. Faith is only the tube by which we receive the blessings, as the branch its strength and nourishment from the vine.

If back of the answer to prayer for the blessings which God has promised His children lies the acceptance of Jesus Christ—and necessary to this is living faith—then the question of great importance is, What may hinder the proper exercise of faith? Faith is the direct gift of the Holy Ghost. And only stubbornness of heart will hinder His working in us this grace unto salvation, and with it the full possession of all the privileges of the Sons of God. All stubbornness and unwillingness to be what God would have us be, is manifest when we are brought face to face with God's law. This is the looking-glass in which all the hideousness of sin is shown. The issue is sharp and clear when the choice is offered between sinful indulgence on the one side, and the blessed promises of God through Christ on the other.

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You must make your choice. The promises of God are to tempt us from sin. And it is folly to imagine that one can realize on the promises of God without first turning from sin with true repentance and faith. The law of God makes clear what sin is. Consent unto the law that it is right, that what God offers is best, with desire to walk in His way, and the Holy Ghost will grant true repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus is opened all the wealth of God's rich and abundant grace in such blessings as shall "supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19.)

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## CHAPTER III.

### A CLEAN LIFE A NECESSARY CONDITION.

HAVING a knowledge of the promises and conditions upon which God answers prayer, having accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, having our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, having the right to approach the Father in the name of the Son, what is the next Scriptural condition with which we must comply in order to expect rightly an answer to prayer? The next obviously necessary condition is, that our lives should be clean, such as is pleasing in the sight of God, that the Spirit may give us the faith to claim His promises. Psalms 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." If one is living a life which is known to be displeasing to God, unwilling to give up some selfish indulgence, unwilling to perform some plain duty, an answer to prayer cannot be expected. I John 3:21-22: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of

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Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." If we are living a life that we know to be displeasing to Him, our faith is stagnated, we cannot come and ask with "confidence," or, as the Revised Version has it, "boldness to God," for an answer to our prayers. James 5:16: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." That is, the fervent prayer of a "right man availeth much." It is not necessary for any child of God to remain under conscious sin. I John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." A clean conscience insures a bright and bold faith. In a testimony meeting in the West several years ago an old gentleman arose and said:

"Sir, you have spoken to me today. I live at the foot of the Rocky mountains; when I can find a day off, nothing is more pleasant than to go up into the rapid, clear mountain streams and fish for trout; but one has to be very quick and expert if he is going to get his game. The trout is a quick and active fish, and able to dash himself up a rapid in such a

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way as to surprise any of us. But how different the trout is when he has allowed himself to be washed down into the low, quiet waters of the plain! He soon becomes sluggish and dead under that water covered with the alkali deposits. He is much more easily trapped or deceived now. In hearing you speak today, I just imagined that I had come down from where God wanted me to live, and where He would give me activity to contend against the enemy. I am a mountain trout living under a stagnant faith in the plain where Satan can easily deceive me. For months, by my weak faith, I have lost the joy and victory I once had in prayer."

Many things in our lives which we would be disposed to defend as all right may prove such heavy weights that our faith cannot rise above them. Some time since a lady friend said to me:

"I do not believe that playing progressive euchre is wrong; I see no harm in it, but I find that euchre parties cost too much."

"How?" I asked. "I did not know that they were so expensive."

"Yes," she said; "only in this way. I go and

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enjoy the occasion quite as much as my friends, and take as many prizes, but for days afterwards I have a deep feeling of regret, for I know I have done what my church does not approve. Last winter I was invited to join a progressive euchre club; I declined, and also the invitation to the first gathering. Shortly after I declined, I awoke one night and found my little son with the croup. I roused his father and hurried him for the doctor. After applying some simple remedy, I knelt at the little bedside and, looking up, said: 'Father, you gave me this child. I want you now to spare him to me.' Before my husband or the doctor had arrived I was perfectly sure that God had answered my prayer. One of the first thoughts that came into my mind when I took his little hand and looked up to my Father was that I had not joined the club, I had not played euchre, so I could pray with confidence, and my prayer was answered."

What she meant, in other words, was just that described by John; when her heart did not condemn her, she had "boldness toward God." John 15:7: "If ye abide in me, and

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my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."

The case of the publican who, after prayer, went down to his house justified, is commended to us by our Lord because of the full confession that was made by him of his sins. The Pharisee saw nothing in heaven or earth purer than himself as he spread abroad his hands in his pretended prayer, while the publican smote upon his breast, and continued smiting, crying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." This is in full accord with James 4:10: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." Until we can come to God and make a clean breast of our sins we cannot hope to be in a position to pray aright. Prov. 28:13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." The Psalms of David show us the true spirit concerning prayer and praise, and these abound in confession of sin. "In true confession all the powers of the soul are engaged. The judgment recognizes the standard of duty and notes the deviations from it. The conscience feels these deviations to be

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wrong, and fills the soul with shame. The heart kindles with a holy abhorrence of what is impure within ourselves. And the will turns from its commission 'with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.' Thus is the sinner purged from guilt, when his confession has been heard by Him who is able to forgive. From this exposition it is easy to see why supplication is coupled with confession. He who is filled with disgust at the hideousness of sin, and who is fixed in his purpose to break from its control, will not rest in the impotence of simply bewailing his calamity. He will implore the divine mercy for the pardon of his guilt, and the divine power for deliverance from its bondage. This is supplication, which may not differ from petition, except in the intensity of its meaning as requests may deepen into entreaty. The etymology of the word indicates at once the humility and vehemence of the prayer, being derived from the kneeling posture of the supplicant when he pours forth his entreaties at the feet of his Master. The prayer of the sinner must therefore carry along with the confession the continued imploring of God to interpose His ex-

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ecutive clemency and saving power in delivering the suffering from the curse which he incurred." Supplication can never be suspended whilst the consciousness of sin remains.

In the tabernacle the altar of incense was not only beyond the altar of sacrifice, but it was beyond the great brazen laver. The great brazen laver was for the cleansing which our Savior describes in John 13:10: "Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." Here He is alluding to those who have been saved by the sacrifice, or who have passed the altar of sacrifice, but who needed to be cleansed in the washing of the great brazen laver. As the altar of incense represented prayer, we see by this illustration that not only must we pass the sacrifice of Christ, but we must be washed clean before we can approach the altar of prayer.

A friend of mine was telling me some time since of his visit to Psico Lake during the past summer. After having bathed in the lake, he and his friends walked through the woods with bare feet to the hotel. When they reached the hotel they were not clean; they needed only to

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wash their feet, not the whole body, to be clean.

The word "wash" which our Savior uses above is really "bathe." To be prepared for prayer, we must be "clean every whit." The Holy Spirit is willing not only to point out to us our uncleanness, but also the promise of cleansing. Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The sin of omission is more frequently the cause of unanswered prayer, than that of transgression. The average Christian is an idler, willing enough to do some form of service, but unwilling to present personally the claims of salvation. The influence of every individual is his opportunity. The love between parent and child, between brother and sister, neighbor and friend, must first be spent in presenting Christ. The average Christian is afraid to present the claims of salvation for fear of an interruption of social joys. God has given us the love of our friends that much influence may be used first in behalf of their souls. Influence is opportunity, and oppor-

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tunity is responsibility. God never rewards idleness and self-indulgence with answer to prayer. Our Savior said. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7). To abide in Christ is the opposite of abiding in sin. To have His words abide in you is to be obedient to His command "to go and to disciple all nations."

### EVIDENCES OF A CLEAN LIFE—THE TEST.

What evidences of a clean life must one have before coming to God in prayer, expecting an answer? This is the direct personal work of the Holy Spirit. Under His influence the clean life is perfectly restful in the promises which God has made. To rely implicitly on God's word is to be absolutely willing to be and to do all that it requires. It is easy to recognize the opposite. When the life is filled with worry, unrest or discontent, be sure that the heart is not filled with the Spirit and that there is something wrong in that life. Again, the Spirit gives a love for all of our fellow men, for those who have treated us unjustly as well as those from whom we have received kindness.

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If, on the other hand, we find that our heart is filled with an unforgiving spirit and revengeful disposition, be sure of the fact that the life is not right and we are not in condition to pray so that our prayer can be answered.

When we come to God with confession of our sins and ask Him to forgive us, how can we hope for forgiveness, if at the same time we retain an unforgiving spirit? No one could possibly owe us so much as we owe God, or be as deeply indebted to us as we are to God. The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer in the Revised Version is very plain: "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." Our Savior's only comment (Matt. 6:14-15) is: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive men not their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." He further emphasizes the same truth in the parable of the servant who owed his Lord ten thousand talents, who, being freely forgiven, went out immediately and finding his own servant who owed him a hundred pence, fell upon him and demanded without mercy the immediate payment of the debt.

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When his Lord heard of the treatment of his fellow servant he delivered him to the tormentors. Another comment of our Lord (Matt. 18:35) is: "So likewise shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." At another time our Savior impressed the same lesson of the necessity of forgiveness when he said that we should forgive not only "seven times, but seventy times seven."

A lady once came to a Methodist Bishop and said: "Bishop, I can forgive but can't forget such a great insult as I have received." "Well, then," he said, "that is all right. Pray, then, just as you forgive, and say, 'O Lord, I want you to forgive me, but I do not want you to forget.'" "Oh," she said, "that would never do. This is what I mean: I can forgive, but I can have nothing to do with one so unworthy of my respect." "All right," said the Bishop; "put that in your prayer, and say, 'O Lord, forgive me, but do not have anything to do with such an unworthy person as I am.'" Again she was puzzled, and said: "Well, I can forgive if my enemy meets me half way. My self-

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respect demands that much reserve." "Well," said the Bishop, "pray that way then. 'O Lord, forgive me when my enemy meets me half way.'" This she feared her enemy would never do, and so she said again, "I can forgive and try to get along with my enemy." "Well," said the Bishop, "do you want to pray that way?" "No," she said, "I suppose I will have to forgive and forget as I hope to be forgiven. But," she asked, "am I expected to approve what my enemy did?" "Oh, no," said the Bishop; "God does not approve sin when He forgives it." Our Savior's injunction cannot be avoided. Mark 11:25: "And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive your trespasses."

To delight to read and study God's Word is a further evidence that the life is clean. Under the influence of the Spirit the Scripture grows every day more precious, on every page some new evidence is found of the Father's love. The passages grow not old, but sweeter every time and more precious every moment we spend in thought upon them. If, on the other hand, the Bible is uninteresting, stale and dry,

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be sure we are not filled with the Spirit and our life is not right. Again, the Spirit makes us deeply conscious of the sweetness of the fellowship with God, and makes us prefer above all things to be in accord with Him. If, however, we find that the opposite is true, that we are longing after the things of the world and desire only those things that concern the world, we may be sure that our life is not right. Every heart that is right will find a longing for the companionship of God; we wish to be in the company of those we love and the time seems to pass only too rapidly when we can claim all their attention. This is the case when we are filled with the Spirit and have special joy in our seasons of prayer with God. I Tim. 2:8: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Indifference to the condition of the lost is, after all, the great proof of the unclean life. This is the supreme test. The missionary spirit is evidence of the clean life.

It is not enough to contribute occasionally to the fund to send the Gospel to the lost. The cry must be, "Here am I, Lord; send me."

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We are saved to serve. We are made rich to enrich. We are brought into the light to enlighten. To deliver one's own soul of the responsibility upon it this must be our determination—to know nothing above Christ and Him crucified. Every one we touch in daily life must not only know that we are saved but that we have been intrusted with a message to the unsaved and that we will deliver it.

It is difficult to say which comes first, the Spirit of supplication or the burden for souls. This is clear when we find a soul-winner; we always find one who has abundant evidence of the answer to prayer. To be rich in service is to be rich in evidences of His grace. Where there is lack of service and sacrifice we hear the complaint, "My prayers are not answered."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### WHAT TO ASK FOR.

Jude 20: "Praying in the Holy Ghost."

"**H**OW may I know that God is willing to grant me what I wish?" is a very pertinent question, and one to which we must have a very clear and definite answer. We find in Scripture specific promises concerning food, raiment, guidance, deliverance, etc. Concerning such matters we know the will of God. Luke 11:13; I Thess. 4:3; Luke 12:32; John 15:8.

There is, however, another class of desires where the trouble comes,—when we are anxious over matters of individual and personal concern, such as the recovery of ourselves or loved ones from illness; the securing of means for the accomplishment of some much-desired end, etc. Concerning such blessings I have no specific promise in God's Word, and am therefore in doubt as to His willingness to grant them to me. The question now is, How may

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I know that I have a right to pray for this special blessing that I so much desire? If in any way I can come to know His will, all would be clear to me. I John 5:14: "And this is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us."

If I am a child of God; if I am a child of God with a clean heart as shown by my restful confidence in His blessed promises; and if the Holy Spirit has granted me deliverance from selfishness, so that I really desire every blessing which I receive to contribute to God's glory; will not the Spirit grant me such a definite "leading" out in prayer that I may know that what I desire is God's will to grant? Or, on the other hand, will he so "hinder" me in making a petition for that which would naturally be my desire, that I am led only to pray for strength to bear the disappointment? The great business of the Holy Spirit is to reveal to us the will of the Father. "When filled with the Holy Ghost, our wills are so completely yielded that we are led to ask for only that which our Father is pleased to give." "The first business of a child of God is to know his Father's will."

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“Let us never forget that the only source of the Church’s genuine life is the Holy Ghost. It is by His power that every sinner begins to live; it is by the same power that he continues to live. It is He who seals us unto the day of redemption. Let us not grieve Him and so forsake our own mercies. We do grieve Him when we cease to look to Him for every spiritual blessing, and for every ‘temporal blessing’ which is needful for the being or well-being of the Church. We grieve Him when we substitute our own inventions for His ordinances. We grieve Him when we so act as to seem to say to the world that our God will not give us the things that are needful for the glory of His name and the prosperity of His cause; that our Rock is no greater than the world’s rock. The Holy Ghost is the glory of the Church.”—T. E. P.

He is our wisdom in this world of darkness and of ignorance; He is our guide, our instructor. To have His teaching in prayer is to secure the great blessings our Father has in store for us. This is what is meant by “praying in the Holy Ghost.” He should first teach us what we should pray for, that we may know

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what God is willing to grant us in answer to prayer. To secure this leading we must go alone with God, and at least a portion of the time must be spent in silence "waiting on the Lord" for Him to instruct and teach us. Laying our hearts open before Him, let us in "spirit and in truth," and with entire absence of self-will, say, "Now, Lord, shape every desire in my soul."

### THE SIN OF IGNORANCE.

The promises of wisdom are simple and plain. James 1:5-6: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." Where does the Scripture say that ignorance is a sin? Time and again in Scripture this is clearly stated. Lev. 4:2-3, 22; 5:15-17; Num. 15:24. We see the priest had to make intercession for the sins of ignorance of the people. So today we have the great High Priest sitting at the right hand of God, the Father, who daily makes intercession for our

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sins of ignorance. How very great is our sin of guilty ignorance! Eph. 5:8: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." Eph. 5:14-15: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." In II Peter 3:5, we have a statement concerning willful ignorance. Heb. 9:7: "The high priest went alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." The word used here for "errors" literally means, sins of ignorance of the people. It is a word not used elsewhere in the Scripture. So in fulfillment of this very type, note Heb. 9:24: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." When we do not know the will of God, we should submit all to God in prayer until we hear the voice of the Spirit telling us God's will. Eph. 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

"The classical passage, however, in regard

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to prayer, is to be found in Romans 8:26-27, where the agency of the Holy Spirit as the author of true prayer is fully expounded: 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' Not only must the Spirit teach us the things to pray for, and work in us the right desires for the same, but the efficiency of His assistance is made distinctly to turn upon His certain knowledge of the divine will or purpose in the case. The prayer indited by the Holy Ghost is sure of its answer; for 'He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' The connection is simply this: God, of His own will, proposes to bestow a special good; the Holy Spirit, knowing this purpose, produces in the heart of the believer the corresponding desire, which utters itself in all the vehemence of true

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prayer; and 'He who searches the heart' of the suppliant discovers His own purpose of grace reflected in the experience which has been wrought in the soul by the Spirit to that very end. He spontaneously willed to bestow, and the creature's desire has been brought into harmony with this, and upon this correspondence between the two—between the will of Him who gives and the desire of him who receives—depends the effectualness of prayer." —B. M. P.

We should specifically emphasize the expression "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," and therefore we should rely upon the Spirit's aid who "maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." If some one wishes to object that this is mysticism, let the objector explain what is meant by John 14:26, concerning the Spirit's work: "He shall teach you all things;" or, John 16:13: "When He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth." When God has made ample provision for us to receive wisdom by the power of the Spirit, it would hardly be possible for us to escape the position of guilty ignorance when we fail to seek and avail our-

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selves of the benefit of this provision. God's responsibility surely ends when He provides a means for wisdom, whether we avail ourselves of it or not. An old lady in England, after working for a living until the limit of her health and strength was reached, was finally dependent upon her neighbors for aid. In answer to some inquiries which were made concerning her wealthy son in America, she stated: "Yes, he has grown rich. He knows that I am poor. He knows that I have had to work hard for a living. He writes me regularly every week, but never says anything about helping me. True, he sends me in every letter some kind of a picture, but he has never said anything about giving me any money." On examination, her friends found that these pictures were really ten, twenty, fifty and one hundred dollar bills, which she had piled away in a drawer as useless.

If God has made ample provision for us to have wisdom, He could hardly be said to be blameable for our suffering the consequence of our guilty ignorance.

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### GOD'S ANSWER MAY BE "YES" OR "NO"— SUBMISSION.

Let us insist that the first requisite of true prayer is submission. This gives God a chance to say "Yes" or "No," according as His will may be. Moses kept pleading with Him concerning a certain personal desire which he had, until God answered him and said: "Moses, trouble Me no more concerning this matter." There seems to be a current opinion that God has promised "Yes" to any and every petition that shall be made. This is not true, but the Spirit will guide us as to whether He will answer us "Yes" or "No." Paul thrice prayed to have his "thorn in the flesh" removed; but he received "No" for an answer. Yet he had special grace given him which gave him victory over the trial.

Our Lord in His offices, Prophet, Priest and King, touches every phase of prayer. As King, he rules over and defends us from our enemies. The greatest of these enemies is self. When He as King defends us from our own selves and selfish desires, he renders us a service of incalculable value. If we were allowed to come

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to the Throne with every vagrant desire, what calamity we would bring upon ourselves!

If we have fellowship with Him He will exercise His Kingly office in leading us by the Holy Spirit. Eph. 2:18: "Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." I John 1:3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." The Spirit is our bond of union between Christ and the Father. He makes known to us the will of our Master upon the Throne. Through the Spirit we are enabled to make our petitions in exact accord with our Intercessor and Advocate, Jesus Christ. The great secret which the Spirit imparts is the will of our King. It is quite as necessary for Him to restrain the wicked promptings of our old self, as it is for Him, by the Spirit, to lead us to definitely ask for that which we need.

Our Lord rules over us in our short-sightedness in showing us by the Spirit that what we need is not the gratifying of our desires, but to know what to desire. If we first submit our

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desires to God to know His will concerning us, He will make known to us His will.

Tarry in His presence until He gives His answer, "Yes" or "No."

### VIVID IMAGINATION NOT SPIRITUAL WISDOM.

The danger lies in becoming a victim of a vivid imagination and in following this without having received the Spirit's guidance. Absolute surrender is never easy, and it is most difficult here. The wickedness of the human heart is no less when one is deeply concerned to secure an answer to prayer than at any other time. To be by any means delivered from a controlling desire is not easy, and especially at this time when there is a possibility of having the desire granted. But because this sacred guidance is difficult to secure and because many wicked men have claimed to have received it, and have used this false claim to cover their wicked selfishness, we are not warranted in denying that there is such guidance. The counterfeit is evidence for the genuine.

When may we say with some degree of assur-

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ance, I know the will of God and I will therefore make my request with importunity?

1. When there has been an absolute surrender of self both heart and will unto God, with all the probabilities and possibilities.

2. When there has been faith to definitely claim and plead the promises of the Word for the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3. When ample time and opportunity have been given to fully submit in detail the entire subject.

4. When our vows have been made that the answer shall be used, with God's help, for His glory instead of our own selfish desires, ends and purposes.

Then we may expect the Spirit to produce such conviction of the will of God as to direct faith to definite petition. The will of God being made clear, faith has the broad field for importunity before it.

This leading of the Spirit, when the conditions are met, may be expected to come gradually through conviction, and not from some sudden impulse. This conviction continues to grow stronger and stronger until there is a clear "leading" or "hindering" in

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prayer. This takes time. Andrew Murray warns us against "Hastily entering God's presence in the power of the flesh." We cannot rush into God's presence and expect Him to hurry His answer. He will brook no such irreverence. The time element is most important. Our pleading for guidance must continue until God sees fit to make clear His will. He alone can determine the length of time; it is not for us to dictate. This is deep mining for great treasure, down through all our willfulness, sin and selfishness, but the reward is worth the shaft.

Many have been turned aside altogether because of the abuse of this truth by fanatics. A great many unscriptural and fanciful ways to discover the will of God have been resorted to. All classes of revelation have been claimed. The Bible itself has been used as a book of fortune-telling. All manner of inquiry and perplexity have supposed to have been solved by opening the book at random and looking for the answer in the first verse that meets the eye. Others have sought to dismiss the entire subject by saying it is all mysticism.

"The exception cannot justly be taken that

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they ascribe a mysteriousness to the Spirit which is open to fanatical abuse. All the operations of the Holy Ghost are secret and mysterious, and the same objection may be urged against His work everywhere. Our Lord Himself declares, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' If this doctrine be abused by any it is at their own peril; and the check against fanaticism is found in the testimony of the Holy Scriptures as to the evidence of a converted state, by which all secret experiences are to be tested. We cannot afford to surrender one shred of truth because of the ambition or pride of those who seek to be wise about what is written."—B. M. P.

### DEFINITE PETITIONS.

Is it right to make definite petitions? An examination of the prayers of the Bible shows that God is displeased with general petitions and answers only special and definite requests. In definite petitions is there not a danger of asking what is contrary to the will or decrees

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of God? This fear is a mixture of unbelief and sinful ignorance.

God's government of the world through His special providence must be clearly seen and admitted before we are prepared to recognize the possibility of miracles, the doctrine of man's free agency, or God's ability to grant special petitions without doing violence to the laws of nature or controverting His decrees. In the minds of those who object to the making of definite petitions there seems to be much confusion, not only as to what God is willing to grant in answer to prayer, but a fear, to which they confess, that there is danger of God's granting us that which would prove to be contrary to the laws of nature.

As to God's granting that which it is not His will, that is on its face an absurdity. That which should most concern us is the possibility of our life being so out of line with His will as to fail to secure that which it is His expressed will to grant. When our desires are not covered by a promise in Scripture there is yet a way, as already shown, by which this will can be ascertained. Having once discovered God's will, all should be clear before us. There

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need be no concern as to whether or not that will is contrary to the laws of nature. The laws of nature are themselves obedient to, or changed to accord with His will.

All created matter is in the hands of the Great Ruler and Creator. And so with the laws of nature which control this matter. When He had created nature with her laws, He did not resign control. Unlike God's laws against sin, His laws of nature came from the positive act of His own will. Had He chosen to do so, He could just as well have made them different from what they are. The length of the seasons He could have made shorter or longer at will. As we find one spring does not copy the temperature, day after day, of any preceding one, so He could have made the year longer or shorter, by causing the planets to move slower or faster in their orbits.

The action of one acid from the laboratory of nature upon another He could have made different from that which we discover it to be. As ruler and governor of the universe, He can and does change these laws at will. There is not one law of nature which touches our lives that is not the direct act of God's will. It was

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His will that made the sun go back upon its dial so many points at the command of Joshua; He it was who ordered that the waters should cover the face of the earth, in the days of Noah; He it was who suspended the laws of nature for a time in that dark hour when the sun refused to look upon the death of the Lamb of God.

“Moral distinctions do not owe their origin to the positive will of God.” These are fixed laws, and He cannot change them, nor could He have made them different from what they are. In order to do so, He must change His own being, since His laws concerning sin find their origin in His own nature. He could not punish virtue and reward vice without at the same time doing violence to His own attribute of justice. He could not, by an act of His will, make truth anything other than the opposite of falsehood and error. The law of truth has its absolute foundation in the being of God himself, which He can neither suspend nor change, any more than He can alter the attributes of His own nature. The hope of the impenitent that God will compromise with sin is vain. To change His law against sin would

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necessitate a change of His own being. With the laws of nature, however, the case is entirely different. Herewith His system of special providence He provides the possibility of answering prayer. Since it is the business of the Holy Spirit to make known to us the will of the Father, we can be sure of the fact that He will not lead us to ask for anything which will cross the path of nature or suspend its laws. If, however, He should find it necessary to perform a miracle for us, it would be still an act of His will.

To avoid making definite petitions many prayers close with the quotation, "Not my will but Thine be done." It is impossible to tell what such prayers ask. They do not pray definitely for a blessing for fear it might not be in accordance with God's will to grant it; and yet they wish very much to have the desire granted. The result is, as someone says, "You have been engaged in only a dumb-bell exercise." Did not Christ pray, "Not My will but Thine be done"? Never in the sense in which this text is ordinarily used. It is a slander to suppose that Christ prayed that He should not go to the cross. There never was a time

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when He regretted His bargain to die for man. Is it not strange, some one says, that Paul and other Christian martyrs met death so heroically, when Christ was so much alarmed and prayed to be delivered from it? There is not the slightest evidence that Christ prayed to be delivered from death. John 10: 17, 18: "I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." In Luke 12: 50 He says in speaking of His death: "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Mark 14: 35 tells us definitely that He prayed for the suffering of that hour to pass from Him. The cup of the bitterness of that hour, however, He wished to remain if it was not the Father's will for it to be taken away. It was, however, the will of the Father to answer His prayer concerning the bitterness of the cup of that hour, as we find stated in Luke 22: 43: "And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him." Some commentators give the striking translation of Hebrews 5: 7: "He was heard in that He feared." He feared that He would die before the cross,

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and therefore that prophecy would not be fulfilled, just as He describes His own suffering in Mark 14:34: "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." For our Savior's prayer not to be answered would be a contradiction of His own statement in John 11:42, where He says, "And I knew that thou hearest Me always." It is clear that our Savior did have His prayer answered, but He never prayed not to die on the cross. The use which is made of the text, "Not My will but Thine be done," is therefore wholly unscriptural. Where correctly interpreted, it is a warrant for definite petitions. In the prayers of the Bible definite petitions are the only ones answered.

"Prayer should be offered in simplicity and detail, because in spirit and in truth. Listen to that noble believer, Abraham's servant, at the Mesopotamian well, taking his master's eternal God into confidence about the well, and the camels, and Isaac, and her who was to be Isaac's wife. Listen to Jacob at Mahanaim, telling the Almighty One about his fear of Esau, and pleading about wives and children, and reminding his friend of the old promise.

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Look at Hannah while her lips move; she is explaining to the Infinite Lord her longing to be the mother of a son. Look at Hezekiah, holding out the Pagan's insulting letter, as if asking Jehovah to read it word by word and inform Himself quite directly of its contents. Hear Nehemiah, in the secrecy of his heart, though the surroundings indeed were public, requesting the God of Israel to influence at that moment the will of Artaxerxes Longimanus. (Gen. 24:12-14; Gen. 32:9-12; I Sam. 1:10, 11; II Kings 19:14-19; Neh. 11:4.)"—G. H. C. Moul.

Another illustration from the Old Testament. God had made known to Israel His willingness to bring them back from the land of captivity, to the land which He had promised to their forefathers for an inheritance. Yet concerning this restoration Israel was not making definite petition. They were asking in a general way, through the old prophet, that He should take them back at such a time as should seem best to Him. His answer was instruction to make their petitions definite. Ezek. 36:37: "Thus sayeth the Lord God, I

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will yet for this be inquired of, by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock."

David in I Sam. 8:30 inquired of the Lord, saying, "If I pursue after this troop, shall I overtake them?" The answer was just as definite: "Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them and shalt recover all."

Take a case from the New Testament, Mark 10:46: Bartimaeus, we are told, belonging to an old and wealthy family, after the loss of his friends and means, had to beg for a living. Everyone knew that blindness was the reason he had to beg. He was told that Jesus opened the eyes of the blind. No doubt for many days he asked concerning every company that passed in the hope that it might be the Lord. Our Savior, on his journey from Perea to Jerusalem, passed through Jericho. When Bartimaeus was told, he vehemently cried out in general terms, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." Jesus commanded him to be brought, and when he came He said, in effect: "Bartimaeus, your petition is too general; make it definite. What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" The

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blind man said unto Him: "Lord, that I might receive my sight." And immediately he received his sight.

Paul details to the Father of his Lord the particular needs of the saints of Philippi, or of Colossae, of his private friend Philemon, and he tells the Lord three times over about the thorn in his own suffering flesh. Read John's prayer that his dear Gaius may be as healthy as he is holy. And let us address ourselves to prayer in their spirit, by the grace of God. Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:3-12; Phil. 4:2; II Cor. 12:8; John 3:2." Let us bring our definite petitions, submit all to God in prayer, and wait on Him until we are led to pray definitely for that which He wills to give. He will hinder us from asking that which is contrary to His will, and will assure us of His sustaining grace.

The late Dr. G. H. C. MacGregor, going into his study one evening, knelt for prayer to ask God's blessing of the services of the evening. The carefully prepared sermon was in his hand. In a short time he was made to see that God did not wish him to use any part of the sermon that evening. Stopping in his prayer,

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he said, "O Father, a text has been many times in my mind this afternoon, and now comes up again. Is it from Thee, and dost Thou wish me to put my sermon aside and preach from this text on which I have made no special preparation?" The result of that prayer was that the sermon was put aside and he entered his pulpit and preached from the text that had been given him. He wondered why he was led to make the sudden change, but the mail the next morning brought him a letter which fully explained the situation. "I was on my way last evening to end my life in the river just beyond your church, when I concluded to stop for a moment and listen to the singing. At the conclusion of the hymn you arose and announced as your text the motto which my mother gave me when I commenced my life of sin eighteen years ago. I never understood it before, but last night, leaning forward in the pew in your church, I prayed for the first time in eighteen years, and God heard my prayer, and this morning I am a saved soul."

It will take an eternity to understand fully the "wonderful provision God has made through the indwelling Spirit for such revela-

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tions of Himself to the believing soul. At present we are only in the outer court, and may not anticipate what remains to be disclosed behind the veil, in the inner sanctuary, of this vast theme. Above all, it is characteristic of this intercourse that it is held with God in all the attributes of His infinite nature. Spirit must touch spirit in what either may contain; and so the human soul draws into itself all it may from the fullness which is in God. In its ignorance it may draw upon the wisdom that is infinite; in its weakness, upon the strength which is boundless; in its impurity, upon the holiness that is absolute; in its sorrow, upon the bliss that is supreme. Sweeping around the entire circle of human wants and desires, we touch the corresponding spring in the divine fullness from which the supply must flow.”—B. M. P.

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## CHAPTER V.

### FORGOTTEN VOWS.

WHAT may be considered the fourth and last condition of answered prayer brings us face to face with what shames us most—our forgotten vows. Men make vows unto God as rashly as they borrow money, and are just as slow in paying. “When thou vowest a vow defer not to pay.” (Eccl. 5:4.) “The Lord thy God will surely require it.” (Deut. 23:23.)

One may be a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. This is our first condition. One may be a child of God with a clean heart, our second condition. One may be taught of the Spirit that it is God’s will to grant a special desire. This is our third condition, but until the fourth condition, the payment of vows unto God, is settled, the answer will be delayed. To know that abundant grace is waiting for our old and long-forgotten pledges to be paid, or to know that the Father turns a deaf ear to our pleading—not because of His unwillingness to

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grant us our desires, but because our word has been time and again broken, our vows and promises forgotten — is humiliating. The promises of God seem to mock us and our faith to flee from us.

The promises of God are precious because they are worth their face value. "God is faithful who has promised." What does He think when we multiply promises and vows and forget having made them?

What vows and promises we made that happy day when Jesus washed our sins away! In baptism we acknowledge the divine claim, and were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the public confession and in the secret whisper the first time we took the sacred bread and the wine we vowed that He should ever be our Lord and what He commanded we would do. We told Him that we were not our own, but had been bought with His precious blood and would forever be His. Since that time, when the world tempted us, have we acted with self-will and self-indulgence, and forgotten our vow to live for His glory?

Since that day vows have been multiplied.

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We have wanted some great blessing and promised what we would do when our answer came. How numerous the promises to serve God in the world and in the church! Have we forgotten all the promises we made in sickness, in distress, in danger, in joy, in sorrow? Have father and mother forgotten those sacred vows repeated over again and again in those happy days before and after they were pronounced husband and wife? Or when they were again repeated over and over if life were only spared when the first little visitor came in the home? What has become of the pledges made in the house of God and before His altar to instruct and to guide that little one in the statutes of the Lord and to early teach Jesus as a Savior?

A Mother's Confession.—“My son is thirty-seven years old, but I have never one time asked him to take Jesus as his Savior. No, he never attends church. His wife and children do not come to our church. When his father died I thought I would say something, but I did not.”

Before that great white throne, when the vows and the record are placed side by side, can there be much joy?

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A Father's Question.—“What if my Lord should say in the face of my vows in baptism, ‘Your son would have been lost had I not used some one to lead him to Me’? It would be an eternal disgrace for some other to lead my children to Christ, after all the professions I have made.”

What a reckoning for those parents who have made their baptismal vows to instruct their children in the fear of the Lord, and to find at least one or all were lost for want of a word of warning!

Recall those long days and nights of weary watching and praying by the bedside of that loved one. What vows and what promises were made in that time of trial! Or was it when we ourselves lay for days and weeks shut in from the world? Through the open window all nature looked so beautiful. Every sound which came from the open air seemed to invite us, the call of some dear friend to come out and join in the pleasure of life. What did we pray and promise? Have we forgotten it all?

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### THE CASTAWAY.

Broken vows may be renewed. The banker often renews a note if not paid when due. This, however, is at the option of the banker, and not the borrower. The unpaid note lessens, if it does not destroy, the credit of the customer. So it is with unpaid vows. The sin is not unpardonable, but the one who leaves a vow unfulfilled is for the time being a castaway, without credit so far as answer to prayer is concerned.

It is the common impression that a minister is lost who turns his back on his vows. He may have lost his privileges, but he himself is "saved so as by fire." Whoever he may be with broken vows unrenewed, is winning no crowns and laying up no rewards while under God's displeasure.

It is a mistake to believe, as many profess, that the sin of broken vows is punished only in this world. The awful consequences may entail an eternal loss. Could any condition be worse than that of the castaway—unused; answer to prayer suspended; the Spirit grieved; the Savior at a distance; and the fellowship of the Father lost? The tenderest passages in Scrip-

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ture are the invitations to the backslider to return to the Father. His promise is: "I will love them freely."

The Archbishop of Cologne being asked by the Emperor Sigismund how to attain true happiness, replied, "Perform when thou art well what thou promised when sick." The ministry of suffering would lose its point if vows were not required.

### GOD'S GLORY FIRST.

God in His infinite consideration has outlined in His word His plans and purposes for the development of the Christ life. He has not only condescended to make His plans known to us, but has invited us to identify ourselves with His kingdom, at the same time promising to furnish all needed power and blessing so that His glory may be the result. Have we the right to expect our Father to see to it that we have a good time in this world? Has He promised a perfectly smooth path all through this life? It is a mistake to suppose that He has promised us happiness in this world independent of its bearings upon the

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future. Out of line with His purposes and His will, we may know that our life will not be happy. John 16:33: "These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." We should pray that we may be conformed to His will, and what we ask must be in view of eternity. In every petition let us ask, "Do I wish this for selfish gratification, or is there a thought of God's glory in what I ask? If He gives the answer just what I wish would it be for my indulgence, or His glory?" James 4:3: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Everything God does has a reference not only to time, but to eternity. It would be unreasonable to ask a gift which concerns only our pleasure is this world. Everything must be for His glory,—“Hallowed be Thy name.” I Cor. 10:31: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

“The Spirit aids us to interpret the divine providence. He who is in spiritual sympathy with God's aims, and is led to an understand-

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ing of His word, has the key to the mystery of earthly events."

In the prayers of the Bible the pleadings and arguments have their sole end in God's glory. At one time it will be a plea for God to glorify Himself in the exhibition of His mercy. At another, His long-suffering, His justice, His faithfulness and righteousness, etc. David pleaded His mercy, Ps. 51:1: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." Daniel makes almost identically the same plea (Dan. 9:18): "O my God, incline Thine ear and hear; open Thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the City which is called by Thy name; for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousness, but for Thy great mercies." Again David pleads His righteousness (Ps. 71:2): "Deliver me in Thy righteousness and cause me to escape." Dan. 9:16: "O Lord, according to Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thy anger and Thy fury be turned away." David pleads with God to manifest His faithfulness: "Hear my prayer, O God, according to my sup-

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plication; in Thy faithfulness answer me. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Moses pleaded God's glory in Num. 14:15, 16: "Now if Thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee shalt speak, saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people unto the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness." Joshua also pleads God's glory. Josh. 7:8, 9: "O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies, for the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it and shall environ us around, and cut off our name from the earth; and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" Hezekiah made the same plea in Isaiah 37:20: "O Lord our God, save us from the hand of Sennacherib, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord, even Thou only." Also Dan. 9:19: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for Thine own sake, O my God; for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name."

It is not necessary to urge men to make vows. The trouble is that they are made too

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hastily. Every vow should be written down in one's Bible and dated. The trouble is not that vows are not made, but in their being forgotten. In the making of vows there is usually very little question as to their being of the right character. In every answer to our prayer the question of God's glory should be the first to be considered. The little expression in the Lord's Prayer, Matt. 6:10, "Thy kingdom come," is very broad and comprehensive. It outlines there everything we ask for. Everything we seek to accomplish should be for the furtherance of His kingdom. It is natural to expect that God, in answering prayer, should keep in mind the furtherance of His Kingdom. Certain it is that He will not answer a prayer that conflicts with the interest of that kingdom, whether that kingdom be the development of the Christ life in us or the spread of the Gospel to other hearts.

### OUR VOW TO MAKE THE ANSWER FOR GOD'S GLORY.

The great argument in our prayer must be our pledge, if He grants us our petition, by His help to make the answer for His glory.

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Job says in 23:3, 4: "O that I knew where I might find Him, and that I might come even to His seat, I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." Not only can we approach the Father thus individually, but we are instructed that two or more can come to Him concerning the same petition, only they must be in perfect accord with each other, and together pledge that should the answer be given with God's help they will see to it that it shall be for His glory. Matt. 18:19 is often misquoted: "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven." The word "agree" here means to "harmonize"; it does not mean simply that two people shall agree to be engaged in the act of prayer, but that they shall be perfectly agreed as to what they will ask, and what they shall do with the answer. Both lives must not only be right but their pledge must be made to God that the answer shall be for His glory. A father and mother must agree to raise their child for God's glory, and argue this before the throne for the recovery of the little one. For them to simply ask for

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the recovery because they love the child, and that he is interesting to them, would not be sufficient. The case is wholly different when the pledge is made that by God's help they will see to it that the little one is raised for His glory. This is the strong plea for family worship.

Abundant Scripture is found to induce God's children to unite their petitions in coming to Him. If each individual is acceptable to God, two would double the force of the argument why God should answer the prayer. But besides this, we have the direct instruction of Scripture for thus combining our requests. Paul urges united petition in His behalf in Romans 15:30: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me." Again we find him urging the same thought in II Cor. 1:2: "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many in our behalf." The most notable incident recorded of God's people being associated in the same petition was the great prayer

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of the disciples at Jerusalem before and on the day of Pentecost. Acts 1:14: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren."

A difficulty seems to have been raised in the minds of a great many, concerning the whole subject of prayer, because the prayers of the nation for the recovery of Garfield were not answered. Is it not true that in these prayers God was told that the nation could not get along without President Garfield, and was not the glory of the nation, instead of the glory of God, uppermost in the minds of those who made the petition? God will not share His glory with another. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we be delivered from the power of selfishness and really seek and ask for that which is for God's glory.

A prayer, therefore, that has any expectation of an answer must have in it a vow that the answer, when it comes, shall, by God's help, contribute to His glory. Not that we may be able to see just how God's glory will always come out of the answer but God can make that contribute to His glory which, to the average

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individual, seems a matter too insignificant for him to consider. However trivial, therefore, the matter, let us see to it in urging the answer that the pledge goes along with the request that the answer shall be for God's glory.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### SOME ELEMENTS OF TRUE PRAYER.

**D**R. HODGE says acceptable prayer has certain elements, the first and most important of which is *sincerity*. Obviously this is necessary, because God is a Spirit, who cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked. For us to use formulas of thanksgiving, without gratitude or confession of sin, without a due sense of our unworthiness, is mockery. A belief in the merit of much speaking is absolutely the wrong conception of prayer.

A quaint old writer says: "God looks not at the oratory of our prayers, how eloquent they are; nor at their geometry, how long they are; nor at their arithmetic, how many they are; nor at their logic, how methodical they are; but He looks at their sincerity, how spiritual they are." Where we find sincerity we also find *reverence*; a due regard for the majesty of the Being to whom we are speaking. The inhabitants of Heaven, whenever that holy place is open to our view, are prostrate before the

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throne, crying "Holy!" Contrast our going thoughtlessly into the presence of Jehovah with as much levity as though He were an inferior being. The next element of acceptable prayer is *humility*, a consciousness of our insignificant position. We should come as the old prophet: "Woe is me because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips," or as Job, when he said, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." What a man lacks in his everyday life, he usually lacks in his prayers. His lack of sincerity, reverence and humility is seen in his prayers.

Andrew Murray says, "The difficulty with the unrighteous man is, that the soul has been so long accustomed to ruling that it is difficult now to surrender the flesh to the leadings of the indwelling Spirit of God." Hence, there is ever going on a struggle between the soul and the Spirit of God. This difficulty must have originated the old fast days. An absentminded man will find much benefit in taking away the food of the body till the pangs of hunger make him conscious of his dependence on a higher power. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." (Matt. 17:21.)

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When once the victory is won, and the Spirit is given His proper place of control in the spirit of man, and rules the soul and body, the hindrance to his offering acceptable prayer "in spirit and in truth" is ended. Andrew Murray says:

"There is a fleshly wisdom and a spiritual wisdom (I Cor. 2:12; Col. 1:9). There is a service of God trusting in the flesh, and glorying in the flesh, and a service of God by the spirit (Phil. 3:3-4; Gal. 6:13). There is a fleshly mind and a spiritual mind (Col. 2:18; 1:9). There is a will of the flesh and will which is of God working by His spirit (John 1:13; Phil. 2:13). There is a worship which is a satisfying of the flesh, because it is in the power of what flesh can do (Col. 2:18, 23), and a worship of God which is in the spirit."

### THE QUIET HOUR.

This is an age of hurry and haste. The time-saving inventions are numerous, as well as valuable. This may in some measure be responsible for the Christian's unseemly haste in his devotions. It is well to save as much time as possible in work, but there are some matters

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into which this haste cannot be introduced without serious results. There is a penalty for one who hurries through the necessary time for rest, recreation and prayer.

The Quiet Hour is a protest against hurried communion with God. The difficulty is met by fixing a definite time to be alone with God. And thus a daily habit is formed.

A definite time set apart for prayer is a necessity. This must not be encroached upon by any duty or pleasure however important. Nothing could be more important than our meeting in conference with God. It takes time for the Holy Spirit to speak through us to God and to speak from God to us. If we would discover God's will we must have self out of the way, and this requires time.

So much has been written and spoken on this subject that one scarcely knows to whom to acknowledge indebtedness. How long one's quiet hour must be is answered between each individual and his God. It may be possible for one to spend hours in devotion, another sixty minutes, and still others may agree between God and themselves that they shall spend only so much as thirty minutes. Whatever length

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of time is determined upon, that is the "hour" and should be an absolutely fixed unit, independent of all hindrances.

Consider some of the hindrances to the observance of the "quiet hour." Hindrances usually come from not having made a business of the "quiet hour." To allow the trivial affairs of the world to come in, such as an unexpected caller, an unexpected errand or duty, will in a short time break all habit as well as determination. "A difficulty is a chance for a victory. It is a sentinel set to guard a treasure. If the sentinel can be removed, the treasure may be estimated by the effort required to get rid of the sentinel." We are told in Daniel, the sixth chapter and the tenth verse, what the prophet did with a hindrance to his "quiet hour." A lion's den stood in the way. Here six words tell us how he treated such a difficulty: "*Daniel prayed . . . as he did aforetime.*"

Some definite time should be set apart for the "quiet hour" in the early morning, if possible—not only because the mind is clearer, the plans and purposes for the day unformed, but because we have this great precedent set by prophets, apostles, and by Christ Himself, our

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Great Example. Ps. 5:3 (R. V.): "O Lord, in the morning shalt Thou hear my voice; in the morning will I order my prayer unto Thee, and will keep watch."

"The regular habit of Jesus seems plainly to have been to devote the early morning hour to communion with His Father, and to depend upon that for constant guidance and instruction. This is suggested especially by Mark 1:35, and also by Isaiah 1:4-6, coupled with John 7:16, 7:28, and 12:49. In addition to this regular appointment, He sought other opportunities for secret prayer as special need arose. After others had retired, three times He remained in prayer all the night, and at irregular intervals between times. Note that it was usually a quiet time, when the noises of earth were hushed. He spent special time in prayer before important events and also afterward. Oh, when shall we men down here, sent into the same mission, the same field, with the same Satan to combat, having the same Holy Spirit to empower, find out that power lies in keeping closest connection with the Sender, and completest isolation from the power-absorbing world?"

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The "quiet hour" will solve every question of weak faith, of feeble understanding and interest in the written Word. It will renew our strength to battle with temptations and perplexities of this life. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

"How much prayer meant to Jesus! It was not only His regular habit, but his resort in every emergency, however slight or serious. When perplexed He prayed. When hard pressed by work He prayed. When hungry for fellowship He found it in prayer. He chose His associates and received His messages upon His knees. If tempted, He prayed. If criticised, He prayed. If fatigued in body or wearied in spirit, He had recourse to His one un-failing habit of prayer. Prayer brought Him unmeasured power at the beginning, and kept the flow unbroken and undiminished. There was no emergency, no difficulty, no necessity, no temptation that would not yield to prayer. Shall not we, who have been tracing these steps in His prayer-life, go back over them again and

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again until we breathe in His very spirit of prayer? And shall we not, too, ask Him daily to teach us how to pray, and then plan to get alone with Him regularly that He may have opportunity to teach us, and we the opportunity to practice His teaching?" S. D. Gordon.

Examination of the lives of those whom God has greatly used will show them to have been pre-eminently men of prayer, who have observed rigidly stated times and seasons for prayer and communion with God. Satan tempts us to say, "God understands my difficulties and my hindrances, and therefore He will grant me the blessing even though I should not have a definite 'quiet hour.'" This is not true. God does not understand why, if we love Him and need Him, we do not spend time alone with Him! There must be, at all hazards, a definite, regular, fixed time and habit of secret prayer. "Man does nothing regular for which he has not a regular time. The reason is, that man, a finitive creature, controlled so greatly by habit, cannot well perform any continuous duty without a season appropriated to it, and that a stated season. He needs all the aids of opportunity and leisure. Nor is there any in-

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compatibility of such stated seasons with our dependence on the Holy Ghost for ability to offer acceptable prayer. Some Christians seem to be infected with the idea that because all true prayer is prompted by the Spirit it is best not to attempt the duty at the stated hour if His *afflatus* is not felt. The folly of this appears from our Savior's words: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' The Spirit is always waiting to prompt prayer. His command is to pray always. If at the appointed hour an indisposition to pray is experienced it is our duty to regard this as a marked symptom of spiritual want and to make it a plea for the petition, 'Lord, teach us to pray.' Every soul is bound to pray statedly in *secret*, because of the example of Christ and the saints; *because* the relation between God and the soul is direct and personal, admitting no daysman but Christ; *because* secret prayer is the best test and cultivation of the spirit of true devotion; because each soul has special sins, mercies, wants, of which he should speak confidentially to his God; and *because* there is in secret prayer the most child-like and unrestrained intercourse between God and the soul. So important are these facts that

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we may usually say that he who has no habit of secret prayer has no spirit of prayer at all.”  
—R. L. D.

Our blessed Lord has not left us without definite instruction as to the “quiet hour,” for no more specific direction could be given than that which is found in Matthew the sixth chapter and sixth verse: “*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*” Eight times the personal pronoun, “thee,” “thou” or “thy,” occurs in this passage. No other such an one is found in all the Scripture. This emphasizes the fact that a third person is excluded. Nothing would be more beautiful than for husband and wife to be in prayer together, or for parent and child, but one thing is better and of more import—aloneness with God, without which there is no growth into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Note the specific directions of the text, “*But thou, when thou prayest.*” The first thought we find in the text is that each one should have some definite conviction concerning prayer. But “thou” emphasizes what we

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should be individually as distinguished from those who worship God hypocritically or in a haphazard manner. The second direction in the text is expressed by the word "when." This points to a definite time which we shall agree upon with God to be spent in communion with Him according to the demands made upon our energy, as well as our time. The third is "where" we should pray. The text directs that it shall be "*in thy closet*," with the world on the outside, free from all interruptions and diversions.

This would seem to be a perfectly natural desire on our part. We desire to be alone with those whom we love. If we love God as we should, would we not desire above all things to be alone with Him? The fourth direction, "*shut thy door*," gives specific directions to the friends not to interrupt for any reason whatever; that we will open the door when we are through, and must not under any circumstances be intruded upon. The text requires us to lock the door, or bar it, so that others could not interrupt us if they were disposed to override our request. Fifth, "*thy Father*." When we are alone with Him we can talk of

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that which intimately concerns us, as we would not under any other circumstances, or in any other ears. The sixth, "*thy Father which seeth in secret*," who knows the secret of our life and that which most concerns us, will constrain us by the Holy Spirit to ask Him that which we most need. This is when His advice is given in regard to the use He will make of us in His service, stirring our heart not only to claim the promises which He has already made unto us, but also new possibilities of usefulness.

Seventh, "*shall reward thee openly*." This is when God, before the eyes of the world, gives proof of the fact that He has heard us, and we are His and He is ours. This is the open revival in the hearts of the unconverted, the foundation of which was laid in secret. It is the factor in the hour of temptation, and an exhibition of strength which has been foreign to us until we have had our closest conference. When we are weak and failing in our Christian life we should tarry for a vision of the Father's face; here we find that strength is imparted to meet the fiery darts of the wicked one. It is in the closet where the Holy Spirit assumes that control in our being which enables Him to

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bring us off more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us.

The observance of the "quiet hour" has its nature and its warrant in the Scripture. Elijah hid himself alone with God before he showed himself to the people, and that he had power with God. Then, too, we can see that the "quiet hour" meets the demands of our own weak nature. The need of concentration of thought necessitates our giving time on account of our infirmities. No one saw Jacob when he wrestled at Jabbok's ford. They only saw him when, as a prince of God, he had power over his brother, instead of his brother having power over him. The Psalmist says: "Wait on the Lord, be silent before Him." While the twenty-third Psalm is full of beautiful and impressive instruction, yet none is more striking than the expression, "He leadeth me beside the still waters." It is the image of the shepherd and the sheep. The nature of a sheep forbids its drinking from a turbulent stream, and it is said that they will actually perish for water rather than do so. It is during the "quiet hour" that the sheep drinks to its satisfaction and quenches its thirst. So here the

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Psalmist praises God for his quiet moments with him.

Aside from the bustle and hurry of the world we can drink of His fullness in secret. The observance of the "quiet hour" disarms our fears lest we fall and betray our Lord. It makes His promises very real unto us and an abiding source of strength. Further, the "quiet hour" makes us very genuine in our religion. It saves from pretense and hypocrisy, from a desire for display in our worship, and insures to us a conscious enjoyment of prayer. One conscious of power does not feel it necessary to parade it; he only feels inclined to use it. Then, too, the "quiet hour" is the secret of power and of victory. Let every one who is tired and worried and bowed down with care test the value of this secret hour with God.

"Many an earnest young Christian is troubled with doubts about certain questionable things, which are very attractive in themselves and which many Christians practice, but which do not seem just right for those who earnestly desire to have their lives please the Lord Jesus. If every such one will make a habit of spend-

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ing time daily alone with God's Word, quietly reading, meditating and praying, he will get not only clear light on every such question, but, better still, courage to walk in the light."

The demons of temptation cannot overcome the soul which has been alone with God and has allowed the Holy Spirit to enter into every part of the being. The subject is illustrated in the lives of many prominent men; and let it be said that while the name "quiet hour" is a new one, the custom is as old as the Gospel. History tells us that when General Havelock was to march at six o'clock, he arose at four in order to observe his "quiet hour." The story of Chinese Gordon and how he kept his handkerchief on the outside of his tent while he observed his "quiet hour" is almost too well known to repeat. Livingstone and Stanley found time in the heart of Africa for their "quiet hour" and the hindrances of the explorer's life did not stand in its way.

A New York minister was present in a conference some months ago, when the question arose, "What first caused you to make any special study of the power of the Holy Spirit in everyday life?" One man assigned one reason

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and another another, but this minister said: "That which led me to desire a deeper spiritual life was a testimony given by a member of my church, a motorman on one of our Broadway cars. He made this statement, which drove me to the observance of the 'quiet hour.' He said: 'I am on my car twelve or fourteen hours, sometimes sixteen hours, every day. My custom is to rise two hours earlier than necessary to go on duty, in order that I may be alone with God in prayer. A man cannot be a motorman without prayer.' From that prayer-meeting I went home, and shutting myself in my study I said: 'O God, I am unworthy to preach to a man who is in daily communion with Thee!' I have men in my church worth millions who haven't his influence. This determined me to be more in the secret of His presence."

The story of Phoebe Brown and why she made the pathway from her home to the little skirt of woods not far away is interesting. It was to avoid the criticism which was heaped upon her that she went thus quietly into the wood for prayer, and this finally caused her to write that beautiful hymn:

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"I love to steal a while away  
From every cumbering care,  
And spend the hours of setting day  
In humble, grateful prayer."

The Spirit of God alone can teach us the joy of secret closet prayer. The disciples never understood the teachings of our Savior until the Holy Spirit brought to their remembrance in the quiet hours of after life whatsoever He had spoken unto them. A testimony: "I appreciate the subject of the 'quiet hour,' and it is not a new thought to me, because of the example set by my mother. It was her custom to observe the 'quiet hour,' though it was not called by that name. Coming into the family room, if the large brass key to the linen closet was on the outside we were free to interrupt her. But there was not a child or a servant in the household who did not fully understand that if the key was on the inside mother would not be disturbed, for she was engaged alone with God. It is impossible for me to reckon what influence the memory of this custom has had upon my life; and then, too, I can never forget that at least once a week I was called upon to be alone with her in the closet. There

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was no chair, but an old trunk upon which we knelt. I never now see an old hair trunk but I seem to feel my mother's arms around me, and to hear her voice mentioning my name in prayer." Ps. 27:14 (R. V.): "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

### ABSENTMINDEDNESS IN PRAYER.

God's will can never be discovered by uttering in absentmindedness a mere form of words. Difficulty of concentration of thought in the daily prayer is an evidence of our weakness and our inability to do anything of ourselves acceptable unto Him. Acceptable prayer is only by the direct aid and power of the Holy Spirit. John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." A deeper truth is taught in this text than absentmindedness in prayer. It teaches that God is not worshiped by the exercises of the soul, but by that part of our being which is deeper, the spirit of a man under the power of the Holy Spirit. God as a Spirit knows whether our worship is real or pretended; He is not worshiped by a mere form of words.

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To worship God as a spirit is not only to recognize that we are worshipping a spiritual being, who knows the sincerity of our every utterance, but it is to have our spirits lie under the influence of the Holy Spirit that our worship may be real. The word "truth" in this passage is not opposed to falsehood, but truth as opposed to that which is a sham and a shadow, bearing an appearance without reality. The words may be rhetorically correct and yet the heart may not be at one with the lips which utter them. Mere lip service offered to God is mockery. Absentminded prayer is lip service, therefore one who is guilty of absentminded prayer is guilty of mockery. This is a fearful sin. In the beginning of the Mosaic dispensation the first sin recorded is the sin of mockery, which was punished with instant death. Achan, the son of Carmi, mocked God, and for this sin he and his whole family were stoned and burned. A monument of contempt for his sin was raised over their ashes. The very first sin also in the Christian dispensation, of which we have any record, is the sin of mockery. Ananias and Sapphira were punished with instant death "when they lied not unto men but

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unto God." It is of equal importance today that we should not be guilty of the sin of mockery, for it is just as heinous in the sight of God today as then.

In the fifteenth chapter of Genesis we find that Abram was instructed by God to prepare a sacrifice, when God cut with him that great covenant, in which we are so much interested. We are told that after he had prepared the offering and laid out the pieces the vultures of heaven came down to pray upon his offering. If he had left them alone they would have left nothing but the dry bones. If we let worldly thoughts alone when we come before God in prayer they will leave nothing but the dry, empty, meaningless words as offering to God. We are told that Abram did as we should do,—“he rose and drove them away.” We should, then, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in prayer, that He may bring us first of all to realize into whose presence we have come before we ask Him to teach us what to pray for. One of the most spiritually-minded servants of God says his first petition when he entered his closet for secret prayer is “that I may realize to whom I am speaking, and that first

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of all I may be very conscious of His presence. After this petition I frequently wait in silence until my prayer is answered." With this realizing sense of God's presence by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will not find it such a problem to "worship God in spirit and in truth," to "devote our own spirits to and employ them in His service with fixedness of thought and a flame of affection." But this requirement of prayer in spirit and in truth applies to public prayer as well as to private prayer and forbids our attempting very long prayers or very beautiful sentences. The simpler and shorter our prayers are the more likely are they to be "in spirit and in truth." Many prayers are uttered to the audience instead of to God. As some one has said, there is a wide difference between perpendicular and horizontal prayers. A Boston reporter wrote concerning the prayer of a certain divine, "it was the most eloquent prayer ever delivered to a Boston audience."

### EJACULATORY PRAYER.

The worship which God asks of His children is not to be found in throwing ourselves

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upon our knees for a few moments at the beginning, and at the close of the day. But it concerns our continued and momentary attitude toward God throughout our waking hours, each moment to be so conscious that God is uppermost in our heart, as our object of chief concern, that we are in a position at any time, and under any circumstances, to be able to speak a word for Him. "Ejaculatory prayer is the automatic, spontaneous throbbing of the heart toward God." The ornithologist tells of a bird that seeks always the highest perch, and is so constantly on the watch for an enemy that the wings are always partly spread, ready to move on a moment's notice into the blue depths of the sky for safety. This should illustrate the attitude of the Christian.

One morning the students in a theological seminary each found under his door a little slip of paper on which these words were written: "Dear brother, I Thess. 5:17." It did not take us long to find out who was so concerned that we should "pray without ceasing." When the members of his class wanted a specially delightful consecration meeting on Saturday night this was the man we wanted always to

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lead us. "Close fellowship with God involves special separation from the world." "Praying without ceasing is not to continue on our knees always in prayer, but it is to maintain such attitude to God that all we do is accomplished by the strength He gives, and is consistent with our petition." "'Pray without ceasing' has reference to the posture of the soul in prayer." —T. E. P.

A company of friends were discussing what was the meaning of this text, "praying without ceasing," when the servant girl stopped and said, "If you will not consider it presumptuous, I will give you my interpretation of the text." Encouraged to do so, she said: "When I awake in the morning my prayer is, 'Open Thou the eyes of my understanding, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' When I bathe myself I pray, 'Wash me with the washing of regeneration and I shall be clean.' When I dress myself, my prayer is, 'Clothe me with righteousness as with a garment.' When I go about the trivial duties of the day, even sweeping the room, I wish to be as careful about the corners of the room as the center, so I pray, 'Cleanse Thou me from secret sins.'"

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How needful it is in this world of accidents, critical moments and exigencies for us to be in such position as to instantly call on God for help! This has been likened to the dead point in machinery, when the great engine will turn, but if the wheels happened to stop at the dead point all the power of the steam box cannot move it. A little motion given to the wheels would prevent this deadlock. So if the heart is constant in its movements toward God we can in any emergency or temptation call instantly and receive help, as Peter when he cried, "Lord, save or I perish."

Neh. 2:1-18: "He longed to leave the court of Persia, where he was in high favor as the king's cup-bearer, and go to Jerusalem with authority to build its prostrate walls." It was quite well known that should one be in the presence of the king with a sad face it would be taken as an indication of meditated treason. Nehemiah did not know that his face had betrayed his sadness, but very suddenly one day the king turned upon him and charged him with it. In making this serious charge, a simple nod of his head to his guards would have taken off the head of the prophet. Ne-

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hemiah knew this; he was conscious of his sudden peril; he tells us in graphic language what he did. In that moment of supreme importance, both to the cause which he represented and his own life, he says, "I prayed to the God of heaven." That was ejaculatory prayer which God just as quickly answered in causing the king to say, "Then for what dost thou make request?" The answer is in his own language, "And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### IMPORTUNITY: THE UNCONDITIONED PLEA.

**A**FTER considering all the conditions of prayer with the importance attached to each condition, grace comes in with something better still—importunity. The three occasions upon which our Savior emphasized the importance of importunity clearly show His meaning to have been to pray to God whether all the conditions of acceptable prayer could be met or not; to pray and to continue to pray, to cry unto God for mercy and to continue to cry, whether there is reason to believe that you will have the answer or not, grounded purely and simply on the fact that you know God to be a prayer hearing and prayer answering God. In other words, importunity teaches that, while all other things may be questioned, yet beyond question is God's ability to answer prayer. One may not have the full assurance of salvation, may not recognize the evidences of a clean heart, may be in doubt as to the leading of the

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Spirit, may have broken vows time and again and yet importunity teaches that one to pray and to keep on praying.

“Christian, has your faith grown weak?

Keep on praying.

Do the tears roll down your cheek?

Keep on praying.

Soon you nevermore will sigh,

Tears no more will dim your eye,

You will conquer by and by,

Keep on praying.”

Take the case of the widow who pleaded with the unjust judge to avenge her, poor and helpless as she was, from her enemy who was imposing upon her. This man feared not God nor man. In other words, he was not bound by laws which controlled such action; yet simply because she continued to cry he said within himself, “I will avenge her lest by her continual coming she weary me.” (Luke 18:5.) And shall not God avenge his own elect who cry unto Him day and night whether they recognize conditions of prayer or not? Our Savior says, “I tell you He will avenge them and avenge them very speedily.” At what time during this importunity the heart of the

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suppliant is brought in such touch with God and under the power of the Spirit as to meet with the conditions then and there we do not know. All we now need to consider is the injunction of our Savior to keep on praying.

The Syrophenician woman in Matthew 25 knew that our Savior made a business of healing people. She had no special reason to believe that He was obligated to heal her daughter. She knew this: that He heard the suppliant's cry. She came before Him, determined to make a test of His willingness. The disciples wanted to send her away. No doubt in a rough manner they told her to begone, but she would not be driven away by them. Only the Master's refusal would end the matter with her. She came near; but now He speaks, and what does He say to her?" I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Ah, that would have ended the importunity of many a weak heart who would have said, "Well, I have no right to come. I do not belong to Israel. I am a Gentile dog." Not so with this woman, and our Savior knew that an object lesson would be given to the disciples that they would never forget. She now be-

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gins even to argue her case before God without reason but as best she can. The dogs take of the crumbs that fall from the children's tables. See what an answer she got. It was a great victory. He gave her more than she asked for. If the salvation of her whole household was in her heart; if there was some infirmity of other members of her family, help for which she feared to ask; if she herself had a weakness which she dared not tell, all that was in her heart to ask He granted her. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Here we see that this woman by continuing her supplications evidenced a faith in Jesus whether she could meet the condition of belonging to chosen Israel or not.

The true method of importunate prayer is set forth in the example of our Savior in Luke 22:44: "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly and He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The agony here described is to stretch outwardly with such intense earnestness as one who is waiting for the word to be given for the race to begin. When we have thus our minds earnestly centered upon our desire and

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continue pleading this desire the Spirit of God will be found ready to help us to meet the conditions for the answer whether we know of them or not.

Importunity in prayer is what the court of equity is in common law. When the letter of the law would take away hope equity comes in and insures justice.

Beate Paulus prayed with importunity for the education of her boys. She was overheard to say to the Father, "I will not be the first to find Thee false. I am willing to be the second. You've never yet been false to one and so I will expect the money." The twenty pieces of gold came and the boys were educated.

### CERTAINTY OF EXPECTATION.

The certainty of expectation is the opposite of importunity and is considered in connection with the great promises in our Savior's last conversation with the disciples, the "whatsoever" passages, such as John 14:13, John 16:23 and Matthew 21:22. These passages are not for everyone. They are bounded by the little words, "hitherto" and "henceforth" (John 16:24 and Matthew 21:22). These great, broad,

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sweeping promises are for those who are no longer servants, but have so far complied with all the conditions as not only to know the conditions to be complied with but have passed from the relation of servant to that of friend. Our Savior said, "Henceforth I call you not servants but I call you friends, for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth," etc. Coming into the close relation of a friend under the power and guidance of the Spirit, knowing the conditions of this friendship, one will not ask for that which is contrary to His will. By long acquaintance one has come to know the will of God and is no longer His servant. He knows not only what to pray for but knows that when he asks the prayer is already as good as granted. (Mark 11:24.) "Whatsoever ye pray and ask for believe that ye have received them and ye shall have them." This text was spoken by our Savior following that strong injunction, "Have faith in God."

Oh, the privileges of a friend! What greater honor can be bestowed upon us than to be called His friends and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him?

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MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF YOUR PRAYER.

Praying cannot be used as a substitute for work any more than work can be used as a substitute for prayer. It is a mistake to suppose that one can compensate for a lack of Christian character by unusual activity in any department of the Church work. Those whom we look upon as officious are not more to be deplored than the ones who utter prayer and continue to remain idle, thus not allowing God to answer their prayer through them.

Mr. Moody conducted a prayer service in which a great many requests were made for loved ones. The late John Hall then said, "You have prayed for your husbands, wives, children, and loved ones. Now move in the direction of your prayer, by telling them of your earnest desires and plead with them to take Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is to live as you pray."

Earnest Christians will pray for years for the conversion of a friend or loved one, and in this time not for one moment allow God to act through them as His messenger to this dear one, for conviction and conversion. The Spirit has been waiting these months, and even

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years, to speak a word through some one which He is willing to bless unto salvation. It is God's plan to use some one as a channel of blessing in preaching, private instruction, appeal, etc., to save those who believe.

Why should personal work be required or why should the saved sinner be urged to go after the lost?

"The power of God alone can quicken a dead soul; and every instance of regeneration might be called a miracle, if the fact were palpable to the senses of other men. It is as really a miracle as the taking of Jericho, or the defeat of the Midianites by Gideon."

In both these instances we find that all the circumstances are so ordered as to show that the whole efficiency is of God, and that the result is due to the direct and immediate exercise of His power through man. While means are commanded to be used, these means are not natural or physical causes, but conditions under which God, in a way of sovereignty, proposes to exercise His power immediately. The means are of a sort to require the activity of human beings to be used for human beings. God's people must be co-laborers with Him.

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The walls of Jericho might have been thrown down and the Midianites routed, as the army of Sennacherib was afterward destroyed before Jerusalem, without the cooperation of the people. But God would not do the work without the activity of His people. The people were to compass the city in a certain order, in a kind of order of battle, and not as an unorganized mob. *The men who were chosen to overthrow the Midianites were picked men.* An army of cowards, it might have been supposed, would suit God's purpose better, as it would make His power more conspicuous. Not so. The cowards were sent home to their wives and children. There was a correspondence between the nature of work to be done and the character of the instruments to be employed in doing it.

Preaching or teaching has been ordained as a means of salvation to sinners in order that the efficiency may be acknowledged to be God's and not man's. The treasure has been put in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God. It is "foolishness" to the natural man; but to the spiritual man it is the occasion of revealing the power of God,

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because there is no natural efficiency in it to convert the soul. A dead sinner cannot be argued or persuaded out of his grave by any logic or eloquence of man or angel. God alone can raise the dead; and that, too, only by an immediate exercise of His power. Personal evangelism is one of the conditions He has ordained in which this power is to be exercised. This ordinance of preaching also is to be observed by the Church, with the greatest zeal and fidelity, as an ordinance of God; and with a steadfast faith in the promised power of the Spirit. Earnest and unceasing prayer is to be made to Him that the supply of ministers may be maintained and augmented, and that all who preach may "so speak, that great multitudes may believe." The Church is never to forget that her great work in the world is "prophesying"—prophesying to the dry bones and prophesying to the Spirit; that she is a co-worker with God, of the Lord and of Gideon—not the swords, but the "sword"; not the sword of Gideon and the Lord, not even the sword of the Lord only, but "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Paul ventures to say to the Corinthians whom he had

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solemnly warned against the sin of making the wisdom of man, or anything else save the power of God, their trust, "I have begotten you through the Gospel." There is a correspondence, to a certain extent, between the nature of the end and the character of the means. Truth is the natural aliment of the mind. The good which the truth of God presents and offers to sinners is the only good in which the soul can rest and be satisfied. The presenting of this truth to men by men, and not by angels, is another instance of correspondence. Sinners can better secure attention from sinners, in speaking of sin, and sinners saved can better secure the attention of sinners to be saved, in speaking of salvation, by the operation of the principle of sympathy. That is a very striking and significant record concerning Paul and Barnabas, alluded to above, that when they came to Iconium, "they so spake, that a great multitude believed." The exercise of God's power is represented as determined, in some sense and to some extent, by the manner in which Paul and Barnabas spake; and the manner would be determined, of course, by the spiritual condition of these ministers at the

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time; and this again would be determined, more or less, by their habitual spiritual condition. (T. E. P.)

Since God has chosen us as co-laborers how may we be most efficient? The answer is simple. By and through the ministry of intercession.

Only a praying Christian is a soul-winning Christian. That one who enjoys most the blessings promised in prayer can best tell of them to poor starving souls. Those most victorious in prayer are most likely to move in the direction of their prayer.

The question has been asked by a famous writer on prayer, whether we really desire that for which we pray. If we make a prayer we should calculate on the answer in such a way as to be sure that we will be ready for it when it comes, and that after all it is what we desire. If one prays for the conversion of a husband, that one must sincerely desire all the changes that might take place in his business habits and life. If one pray for a revival of religion, what if this should altogether change social plans and habits for a winter—would it be desired? If one pray for the baptism of

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the Holy Spirit, what if it should put at variance our wealthy friends when they saw us filled with the Spirit? What if this should bring us a change of field, away from congenial surroundings, with many personal sacrifices? If God has laid it upon the heart of one to pray for the salvation of a soul, that one can be importunate in prayer for that soul. Some one might ask, "Why should I not ask for the salvation of the whole world?" You could not speak with each one personally. You could not move in the direction of your prayer; those for whom we pray we are expected to speak to personally, urging an acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Savior, thus moving in the direction of our prayers.

### THE LAST PLEA.

Our Heavenly Father wishes us to become His children infinitely more than the sinner is possibly able to do for himself. He knows the difference and distance between life and death, between being saved and lost.

Therefore pray!

The Father says we must have clean hearts; we cannot with these old selfish passions and

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lusts of the old nature. His pleading, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," has back of it all the clear light of omniscience. Take His word that it is best. He wishes to give the power.

Therefore pray!

The Father loves to send the Holy Spirit within our hearts that He may show us the deep and hidden treasures of His Grace; that He may love and guide us in the way; that we may grow to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus and we shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness.

Therefore pray!















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